

KENT EDUCATION
• COMMITTEE •



COUNTY
LIBRARY

Book No. 833.7/56 Class 824

Cancelled

2330

FRIDAY MORNINGS

1941-1944

Also by Harold Nicolson

MARGINAL COMMENT
SMALL TALK
SOME PEOPLE
BYRON
LORD CARNOCK
PEACEMAKING 1919
CURZON
DWIGHT MORROW
HELEN'S TOWER
THE DESIRE TO PLEASE

COUNTY 1000
SPRING 1919

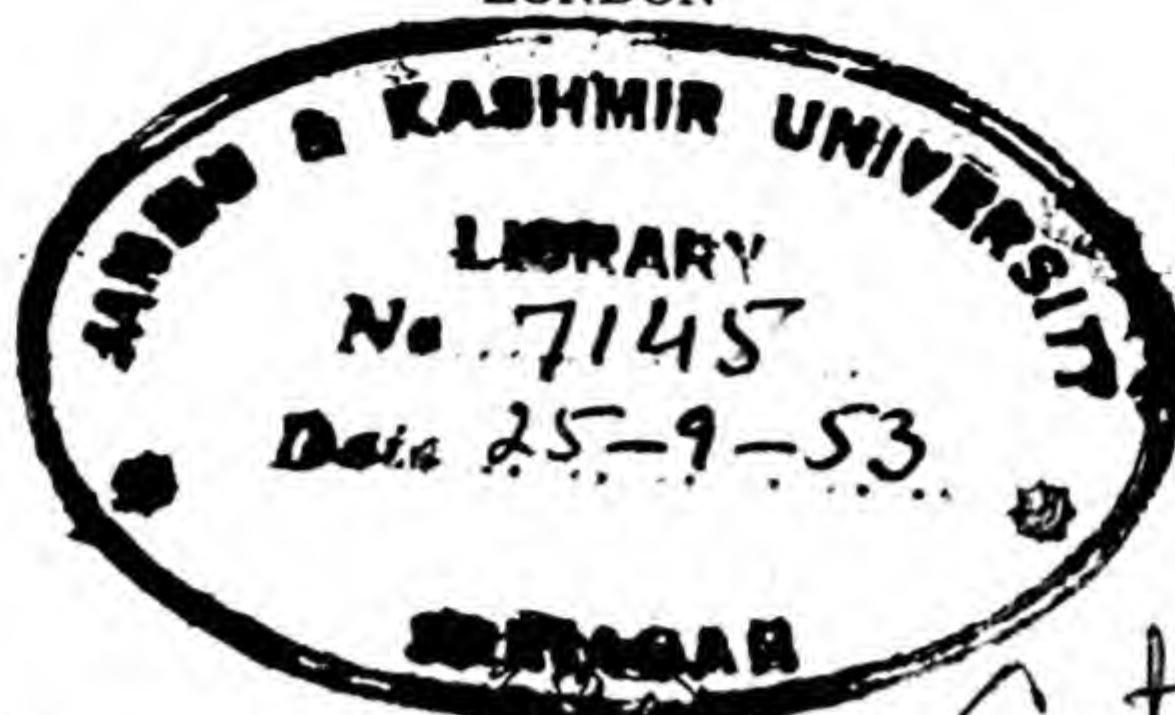
HAROLD NICOLSON

FRIDAY
MORNINGS

1941-1944

CONSTABLE & CO LTD LONDON

PUBLISHED BY
Constable and Company Ltd.
LONDON



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED
IN COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH
THE AUTHORISED ECONOMY STANDARDS



ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY



7145

First published 1944

CATALOGUE BY

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW

CONTENTS

1941

- I *August 29 The German Soul* p. 1
- II *September 5 Reza Shah Pahlevi* p. 5
- III *September 12 The American Idea* p. 9
- IV *September 19 Tzarist Russia* p. 13
- V *September 26 France and Belgium* p. 17
- VI *November 7 Lord D'Abernon* p. 21
- VII *November 14 War Nerves* p. 25
- VIII *November 28 The Dismissal of Weygand* p. 30

1942

- IX *January 23 Women in Diplomacy* p. 35
- X *January 30 Foreign Names* p. 39
- XI *February 6 British versus German Humour* p. 43
- XII *March 6 Colonel Blimp* p. 47
- XIII *March 27 Eire in Wartime* p. 51
- XIV *May 1 Ronald Cartland* p. 55
- XV *May 8 Vansittartism* p. 59
- XVI *May 22 Our Debt to Russia* p. 63
- XVII *May 29 The Small Shopkeeper* p. 67
- XVIII *June 5 Shakespeare's Flowers* p. 71
- XIX *July 24 Lord Lloyd at Burg el Arab* p. 75
- XX *August 14 De Gaulle* p. 79
- XXI *September 4 Translations of English* p. 83
- XXII *October 2 Churchill as an Orator* p. 87

- XXIII *November 20 Hitler and the Change of the Tide* p. 91
 XXIV *November 27 Jacques-Emile Blanche* p. 95
 XXV *December 18 Fire-watching* p. 99
 XXVI *December 25 The Persecution of the Jews* p. 103

1943

- XXVII *January 1 The House of Commons in War* p. 107
 XXVIII *January 22 A.B.C.A. and the Beveridge Report* p. 111
 XXIX *January 29 The Future of the Public Schools* p. 115
 XXX *February 5 The Reform of the Foreign Service* p. 119
 XXXI *February 12 Women in Parliament* p. 124
 XXXII *February 19 The Vieux Port at Marseilles* p. 128
 XXXIII *February 26 The Debate on Beveridge* p. 132
 XXXIV *March 12 The Death of Speaker Fitzroy* p. 136
 XXXV *March 19 Homer as a Poet of Nature* p. 140
 XXXVI *March 26 No Ruz* p. 144
 XXXVII *April 16 Evacuation Disclosures* p. 148
 XXXVIII *May 7 Tunisia and the Classics* p. 152
 XXXIX *May 14 The Fame of Byron* p. 156
 XL *May 21 Carthaginian Victory* p. 160
 XLI *May 28 The Refugee Problem* p. 164
 XLII *June 4 The Bombing of Germany* p. 168
 XLIII *June 25 Sir Stephen Gaselee* p. 172
 XLIV *July 23 Princess Pless* p. 176
 XLV *August 13 The Fall of Mussolini* p. 180
 XLVI *August 20 Weeds* p. 184
 XLVII *September 3 King Boris* p. 188
 XLVIII *September 17 Hitler Speaks* p. 192
 XLIX *October 8 Blitz Memories* p. 196

- L *November 12 Sweden in Wartime* p. 200
LI *November 26 The Lebanon Crisis* p. 204
LII *December 3 Oxford and the Younger Generation* p. 208

1944

- LIII *January 7 Edwin Lutyens* p. 212
LIV *January 14 Herr von Ribbentrop* p. 216
LV. *January 21 Horace and the Italian Campaign* p. 220
LVI *February 11 Jean Giraudoux* p. 224
LVII *February 25 The Bombing of Works of Art* p. 228 .
LVIII *March 24 Sidney Keyes* p. 232

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THESE articles were all written for the *Spectator*, in which they appeared under the title "Marginal Comment". I am indebted to the Editor for permission to republish them.

H. N.

I. THE GERMAN SOUL*

LORD VANSITTART, in this week's *Sunday Times*, questioned with his accustomed vigour the use made in the Atlantic Charter of the phrase 'Hitlerite Germany.' I agree that the too frequent repetition of that partial and unlovely designation may lead to misunderstanding. The word 'Nazi,' with its firm first syllable and its sneaking second, provides a deft tone-signal for the Prime Minister's combative contempt, yet in reality it is as illogical to refer to the 'Nazi air-force' as to designate the R.A.F. as Conservative, Liberal or Labour. I agree with Lord Vansittart that if we slip into the verbal (and therefore mental) habit of regarding the *Parteigenossen* of the National Socialist Party as our only enemies we may trick the public into assuming that a change of leadership in Germany might also entail a change of heart. It is clear from the controversy which has raged around *Black Record*, as indeed from the correspondence in this periodical on the subject of the German soul, that the public as a whole are still uncertain whether we are fighting Adolf Hitler, or the Nazi Party, or Prussian militarism, or the New Order, or the German people. It may seem strange to foreign observers that the British people should embark upon the third year of the Second German War without having achieved any common or consistent opinion upon the nature of their enemy. We have a congenital tendency to prefer pleasant illusions to unpleasant facts, and it is assuredly more comfortable to wish to believe that we are fighting a small group of party gangsters than to admit that our opponents are a brave and competent nation of eighty millions. Yet I hold (at least to my own satisfaction) that if we resolutely discard all comfortable illusions, and strive to penetrate to the centre of uncomfortable fact, we shall not find the centre as unmanageable as so many suppose.

There are several current fallacies which blur our judge-

* August, 29, 1941.

ment. At one end of the scale there is the view that all Germans are equally evil and that the sole solution of the German problem is the extermination of the whole Teutonic race. I refuse to subscribe to so defeatist a doctrine, and I trust that my marked distaste for the whole Hegel-Hitler theory has not destroyed my solid respect for the virtues of the German people. At the other end of the scale there is the illusion that the German people, and especially the working-classes, do not in fact desire any wars of aggrandisement and that they have been tricked into aggressiveness by the cunning and rapacity of their leaders. Here again one may doubt whether any nation, however mutton-headed they may appear, could in fact have been tumbled into warfare against their will five times within a single life-time. One must admit that something ails the German soul. I hope in this article to indicate what, in my opinion, is the nature of this malady and its cure.

Let me first dispose of three further fallacies. There is the general fallacy that human nature is fundamentally the same whether at Cheltenham or Chungking, and the particular fallacy that in spite of superficial differences the British and the Germans are racially and temperamentally akin. The former theory is demonstrably untrue; the latter illusion derives from the readiness with which the British tourist bases generalisations upon experiences which are local and momentary. It is quite true that the Germans, with their passion for useless information, are interested in even the dullest Englishman, being constantly preoccupied with the riddle why so small and unmethodical an island should have acquired so large a section of the globe. The French, on the other hand, are interested in the ordinary Englishman only in so far as he spends money. Thus the British tourist returns from Germany with the feeling that he has been welcomed as a man of intelligence and power; and from France with the galling suspicion that he has been treated merely as an invisible export. Yet, in fact, there is a more fundamental affinity of character between the French and British of the twentieth

century than between the British and the Germans. We and the French wish only to work out our own ways of life in security; the Germans desire, through adventure, to acquire some new way of life. And this constant striving for adventure leads to blood and tears.

There is another, and in appearance a more scholarly, fallacy which I find seductive. It is the conception (so ably expounded recently by Dr. Stern Rubarth) that if Prussia could be enucleated from the Reich, then we should all return to health, sanity, and '*über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh.*' A more elaborate variant of the fallacy places their blame upon the earliest Hermann, or Arminius, who defeated Varus in the Teutobergerwald in A.D. 9. This misfortune induced Augustus to withdraw his frontier from the Elbe to the Rhine, thus depriving northern Germany of the civilising benefits of Roman rule and creating a permanent dissonance in the German soul. It would be comforting could we suppose that any reliable difference today exists between the descendants of those Germans who were enclosed with the Roman *limes* and those pagan septs who raged and ravaged outside. There was indeed a time when the divergence between the civilised and uncivilised elements in Germany was apparent and effective. Bismarck flung the whole weight of his genius into eradicating that divergence, and Hitler has completed the process of unification and has expunged the traditions of Roman urbanity even from the gentle Rhineland. Austria remains today the sole repository of the Roman tradition in Germany.

Let us assume, therefore, that in the course of the last eighty years the Germanies have been able to acquire not merely a unitary Reich but also a unitary soul, and that this soul is sickened by a restlessness which five times during that same period has brought misery to Europe. In order to define this malady it is not necessary to agree upon the nature of the causes which have produced it. It may well be that some poison was brewed in the Mark of Brandenburg and in the wastes of East Prussia by the mingling of the Teutonic

Knights with Slav immigrants, and that this poison gradually infected the more sedative Germans of the South and West. It may be that their constant lack of geographical, racial, political and even religious outline inhibited the gradual growth of self-reliance as we have known it in our own island. Yet the fact remains that there exists in the German soul a persistent uneasiness which they themselves are apt to define as 'morbid subjectivity,' but which is rather a conflict between extreme self-assertiveness and extreme self-distrust. The reason why Hitler was enabled to become the great shaman of all the Germanic tribes was that he understood the exact nature of this duality, and was able by his revivalism both to assuage their self-distrust and to inflame their self-assertiveness. Yet upon what unstable foundations has he built his tragic experiment! Since even the most fanatical self-assertiveness is subject to the law of diminishing returns and becomes satiated when whole continents have been drenched in blood; and since when once the lust of victory flags, the pang of self-distrust tugs once again at the German soul and the calm faith in destiny becomes a twitching sense of doom.

If this be a correct diagnosis of the German malady (and I am sure that some such poison bubbles in every German soul) then surely the Atlantic Charter goes some way to suggest a remedy. By providing the Germans with the hope that their genius, their abounding energy, will be given pacific outlets for expression it may well prevent their self-distrust from again becoming septic. By telling them conclusively that the path of violence will henceforward be closed to them it will entice them into seeking other outlets from their spiritual difficulties. The Charter and its consequences are inevitable; the 'protracted spiritual regeneration' which Lord Vansittart advocates will also be essential; but I do not despair that if we are very strong and very generous Odin may once again become a citizen and neighbour.

2. REZA SHAH PAHLEVI*

ONE OF the worst evils of totalitarian war is that sooner or later it compels even the most civilised countries to behave in an uncivilised manner. We who proclaim ourselves the defenders of small nations have been obliged to seize by force both Iceland and Iran. As one who was born and bred in Persia I was peculiarly distressed to find my two native countries arrayed against each other, even though the conflict was short and soft. For twenty years we have been worsted by successive Persian Governments in diplomatic intercourse, and nobody who has ever experienced their protean methods could deny for one moment that when vital issues were at stake it was essential to pass from argument to decision. We can congratulate the Foreign Office and the India Office upon the speed and efficiency with which action was taken once action became inevitable. We may be glad that Reza Shah realised so rapidly the proportions of power set against him and did not seek to test his army either in the Peitak Pass or on the Karun. We may feel confident that the conditions to be imposed will not be extravagant, that the essential independence and dignities of Iran will be respected, and that when the war is over our forces of occupation will be withdrawn as they were withdrawn in 1919. Yet there remains a pang of conscience. Many people in this country and abroad are distressed by the constant recurrence of the paradox that in order to crush evil we are obliged ourselves to commit evil. The Germans, who have for generations both derided and exploited our tender conscience, will as usual jeer at such inhibitions, attributing them to our far-famed hypocrisy. Yet, if once we allow our conscience to grow the scab of callousness, then we shall be unable to fulfil the difficult responsibilities which will be ours when victory is won.

It is for reasons such as these that we have welcomed the modesty and moderation with which at Coventry Mr. Eden

*September 5, 1941.

referred to the Persian situation. He might well have claimed a resounding triumph, or draped the realism of our action in the fabrics of self-righteousness. He did neither of these things; he did not pretend that our invasion of Iran was anything else than a harsh operation of war. He treated the whole transaction with calm outspokenness; he used no false words. The Russians meanwhile have occupied Azerbaijan and assumed control of the Caspian provinces; a joint Asiatic front, with life-lines and pipe-lines complete, has been established almost overnight. The Shah issued his order for cease-fire, and the aged Ferooghi was dragged from his scholarly labours on the final edition of Firdausi and placed at the head of a Cabinet with which, we trust, solid relations can be maintained. This demonstration of prompt and conjoint power on the part of the British and Russian Governments will echo throughout Asia. It stabilises an area of uncertainty; it opens out an area for future action.

Through the dust raised by this sudden reversal of the gears of Iranian policy looms the large, lonely figure of Reza Khan Pahlevi. Persian history would seem to be as recurrent as it is ageless, and the same patterns form and re-form across those many thousand years. Again and again do we find a dynasty declining, and some young soldier seizing power and taking for himself the diamonds, the rubies and the peacock throne. A renewal of Persian nationalism ensues, the young soldier becomes an emblem of regeneration, he frees his country from foreign influences, he founds a new dynasty, he amasses enormous wealth, and he imposes upon his people such particular forms of progress as suit his personal tastes. But then, as the pleasures of his sultanate begin to pall and the chill of older age creeps upon him, his days become darkened by suspicion; the companions of his early adventures, the architects of his central success, are alienated, exiled, murdered; enraged and sullen the potentate stalks alone through the frail palaces which he has built for forgotten loves; the crude parquet creaks at his passage, the chandeliers tinkle as he lumbers by. It was thus with Nadir

Shah; let us hope that with our assistance, the future holds a brighter hope for Pahlevi.

In the safe at the Netherlands Legation at Teheran there lies, or used to lie, a faded photograph of some former Dutch Minister issuing from the arched gate of his residence for his morning ride. On each side of this gate a Persian sentry stands at the salute. The one on the left is unknown to history; the one on the right is recognisably Trooper Reza, subsequently King of Kings. It was to Lord Ironside that Reza owed his elevation from the ranks. The British general, inspecting one morning a detachment of the Persian Cossacks, was pardonably impressed by the martial bearing and the determined features of the trooper from Savad Kuh. It was as Sartib Reza that, but a few months later, he dashed with his Cossacks along the road from Kasvin and arrested the whole Persian Cabinet in Teheran. It was largely owing to another Englishman, Sir Percy Loraine, that he owed his subsequent rise to power. After the collapse of Lord Curzon's Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1919 it was evident that Persia was heading for complete disintegration; the only hope was that she could be renovated under strong leadership from within; Sir Percy rightly foresaw that Reza Khan was capable of such regeneration. And thus it came about that the Qajar dynasty was deposed by the Majlis, and Reza Khan was able to affix the great diamond of the Moghuls, the Darya-i-Nur, to his khaki hat.

There followed a period of fervent nationalism, industrialisation and reforms. An American financial mission introduced some sort of order into Persia's incoherent fiscal system. Communications were improved, and the great trunk railway constructed. The nomadic tribes were brought under control, brigandage was abolished, the special privileges hitherto enjoyed by foreigners were drastically curtailed. German specialists were engaged to establish those essential factories which Persia had hitherto been glad to do without. And the Persian head-dress was abolished, at first in favour of a cap called the '*kola pahlevi*,' designed, it was said, upon

the model of those worn by Belgain customs officials, and later of any old cap that any man could buy in the bazaars. The English visitor is often inclined to an unfair and perhaps impertinent regret at the disappearance of oriental 'picturesqueness.' Yet it was tragic to watch the old and gentle civilisation of Persia imitating our materialism.

It was sad to see how year by year the sweet and ancient flowers of Persian culture were replaced by plants bedded out from Odessa or Berlin. I recall, as symbolic of what happened, the courtyard of the theological college at Isphahan. When I first saw it in 1925 it was filled with lilac bushes and iris, which repeated the tints of the tiled dome and colonnades, producing variations from deep purple, through aubergine, to faint lilac, a colour-scheme which assuredly I have never seen excelled. I returned in 1926. The lilacs and the irises had been replaced by scarlet salvias and the screaming accents of the canna tribe. Such, in so many ways, is the modernisation to which Iran has succumbed.

I can picture Reza Shah at this moment strolling sullenly up and down the gravelled pathways of his garden at Shimran, his great frame clad loosely in light khaki, his fingers toying with a frail necklace of amber beads, his eyes discoloured by dyspepsia and mortification. The vicissitudes of Persian history are in truth amazing. For while Reza Shah stalks lonely under the snow pinnacles of the Elburz, Prince Hassan of Persia, the head of the Qajar dynasty, the descendant of Fath Ali Shah, sits in a small room in a small house in a small Welsh town, reading *Horizon*, and supporting his exile with that gay dignity, that patient fatalism, which is the heritage of his race.

3. THE AMERICAN IDEA*

I AM glad to hear that the Board of Education is encouraging Local Authorities and the Universities to teach the rising generation something more about American history and culture. Hitherto our ignorance of the United States has been shameful and unwise. Shameful, since it is a somewhat degrading symptom of national conceit. Unwise, since unless we understand the differences between ourselves and the Americans we shall never achieve that sound basis of co-operation which is the hope of all the world. Those of us who have lived and travelled in the United States have been distressed to discover, under the warm blanket of American kindness, a layer of special sensitiveness in regard to the visiting Englishman. Other foreigners are taken more or less for granted. Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Australians, Scotsmen or Chinese can behave with tactlessness and their sins will be forgiven unto them. Yet the mildest comment of the visiting Englishman is apt to be interpreted as a criticism; and even his praise, however spontaneous and sincere it may be, is assumed to be patronising. It may be true that many visiting Englishmen have shown bad manners toward their American hosts; yet in the mass we are a kindly race, and if we are constantly wounding the susceptibilities of the Americans it must either be that their feelings are exceptionally tender (which is absurd) or that there exist special causes of friction which exasperate and inflame. I have often sought to analyse these causes.

People will tell one that it is because we speak the same language with a different accent and do not always laugh at the same jokes. Others have suggested that the Englishman's habit (when shy or frightened) of retreating behind his own face gives an impression to the extrovert American of glum superiority. Yet surely the main cause of misunderstanding is our blatant unawareness of American history and culture.

*September 12, 1941.

Our ignorance of the amazing epic of America places us in a false position from the start. For whereas the Americans know a great deal about our history, traditions and literature, we know but little about theirs. The stories which were dear to us as children are also dear to them; yet they have other, and even dearer, legends which we do not share. The Americans know about King Alfred and Magna Carta and Mr. Pecksniff and Gerard Manley Hopkins; how many Englishmen know about Betsy Ross and Emily Dickinson? We are apt to dismiss the American Revolution as an unfortunate episode arising from some diplomatic blunder on the part of Lord North; we know little of Lexington and Concord and Valley Forge; the average Englishman could not tell you who succeeded George Washington as second President, nor is he aware that there was a second Anglo-American war in 1812. Such ignorance is unintelligent and rude, and we should not be surprised that the Americans are insulted by our indifference to their tremendous past.

I recall with shame a spring afternoon when I drove out with an American friend and a visiting Englishman to George Washington's home above the Potomac. The whole of Washington was a riot of Japanese cherry-trees, but the orchards around Mount Vernon were gay with sturdier and more productive blossom. I always enjoy a visit to Mount Vernon, which is in truth one of the most lovely and dignified of country-seats. My pleasure on this occasion was diminished by the ill-concealed astonishment of my fellow-countryman. 'Well, I'm blowed!' he exclaimed as he gazed at the lovely portico and scanned the long range of outhouses and stables. 'Well, I'm blowed!' he repeated when we entered the house and he saw the furniture, the silver and the pictures. He had no wish to be offensive, yet it was evident that he had never imagined that George Washington was a man of wealth and culture or that the American aristocracy before the Revolution had attained to so high a level of eighteenth-century elegance. He could not have been more surprised if he had come upon an onyx bathroom in a Basuto hut. My embar-

rassed eyes met those of my American friend who smiled across at me. It was a forgiving smile, but it taught me why even our praise can sometimes wound. If the Board of Education scheme reaches the dimensions which Mr. Butler contemplates, then the study of American history, thought and culture will become part and parcel of our school and university curriculum. The young Englishman of the future will visit Mount Vernon with deference and not with surprise.

I do not deny, however, that it will for long be difficult for any European to catch the full inspiration of the American Idea. We are so accustomed to assume that national identity can only become real through generations of gradual growth, that we are inclined to regard American nationalism as something comparatively artificial and unauthentic. The fact that the concept of 'America' is something less congenital or localised than is with us the concept of 'England' leads us to imagine that American patriotism is not a pulsation of the blood-stream but a deliberate form of belief. To those who are misled by this fallacy I recommend what I regard as one of the finest of modern American poems, the 'American Letter' of Archibald MacLeish, the Librarian of Congress (whom we are this week to welcome to our front line). His verses explain much: •

'It is a strange thing—to be an American . . .
Neither a place it is nor a blood-name.
America is West and the wind blowing.
America is a great word and the snow,
A way, a white bird, the rain falling,
A shining thing in the mind and the gull's call.
America is neither a land nor a people,
A word's shape it is, a wind's sweep . . .
America is alone and the gulls calling . . .
Here we must live or live only as shadows.
This is our race, we that have none, that have had
Neither the old walls nor the voices around us.
This is our land, this is our ancient ground—
The raw earth, the mixed bloods and the strangers,
The different eyes, the wind, and the heart's change.

These we will not leave though the old call us.
This is our country-earth, our blood, our kind.
Here we will live our years till the earth blind us—
The wind blows from the east. The leaves fall.
Far off in the pines a jay rises.
The wind smells of haze and the wild ripe apples.

I think of the masts at Cette and the sweet rain.'

Let us respect such patriotism and nostalgia and not jab at them with clumsy thumbs.

If we understood a little better the vast import of the problems and perplexities with which Americans are now faced, we should be both more sympathetic and more interested. We do not always remember that the fathers and mothers of most Americans left Europe because they did not like it, and that there remain hereditary memories and associations which tug their nerves apart. We do not always remember that although in this war their ideals are identical with ours, yet 'The American Idea' is an even more abstract conception, that it is 'a shining thing in the mind.' Immense and frail, this Idea dominates their consciousness and they fear that if again they become entangled in the complexities of Europe the rainbow may fade. They have forgotten many of their past grievances against us because of the physical sufferings which we have proudly borne. If we on our part realise their deep spiritual anguish at this moment, we shall come to understand their generosity of soul. And from this understanding may come what is the basis of all sound co-operation, namely deep mutual respect.

4. TZARIST RUSSIA*

ST. PETERSBURG remains always in my memory as a lonely city, striving in vain to live up to its own vast scale. That scale was set by the Neva, widest and swiftest of all town-rivers, which, after tumbling under the Troitzky Bridge, swelled out into a great estuary dwarfing the quays and palaces which line its banks. At midnight in June it would still swirl under a faint sun, and on December afternoons at two o'clock the lamps were lit upon their wooden trestles and the horse-trams would creep slow and black across the wide untidy surface of the ice. The depression which this city caused me was due perhaps to the circumstance that I at the time was passing through the gloomy period of my later 'teens, and Russia at the moment was still aching from the wounds of her Japanese defeats and the abortive revolutionary movement which ensued. My elders were more optimistic. Anarchism, they felt, had seen its day; Russia was on the road towards a wider liberalism. Under a gentle Tsar and a strong Prime Minister, with the assistance of a Duma which was daily becoming better educated in its own responsibilities, Russia could evolve into a vast community of peasant-proprietors and enjoy a period of peace, prosperity and concord.

All that was in August of 1906. I would sit on the balcony looking down upon the Neva and reading *Crime and Punishment*. It produced upon me a disturbing effect. I did not feel somehow that the Russian temperament contained that element of spiritual restfulness so essential to any democratic system. My father would point across the river to where the chimneys of the Putiloff works belched heavy smoke. 'The strikes are over', he would exclaim delightedly. And Stolypin, tall and black with cold, white hands, would come to luncheon. He would explain how, upon the basis of a contented peasantry, the Russian Duma could be reconstituted as a

*September 19, 1941.

stable parliamentary system. And indeed all this might well have happened had not the Tsar listened too readily to false advisers and had Stolypin's life been spared. For even Trotzky, much as he disliked the idea of peasant-proprietors, which he calls 'nests of tiny capitalists', admits that Stolypin was a great man.

Yet St. Petersburg, and even Petrograd, was too unauthentic to survive. They still preserved in those days the little hut where Peter the Great had first laboured upon the building of his 'paradise.' Across the river, the small summer-palace which he later constructed still contained the looking-glasses which had mirrored his titanic orgies. From my balcony, as I read *Crime and Punishment*, I could see the slim spire which Domenico Tresini had designed for the prison-fortress of Peter and Paul. It rose like a long gold needle above the baroque steeple, a thing of gaiety and grace. Yet underneath, as I well know, there lay the granite dungeons tenanted by many despairing men. Never could one get away from that sense of oppression and secrecy which is the bane of Holy Russia. We knew that our hall-porter was in the pay of the secret police; we could watch ceaselessly the Cossack patrols, with their loose white jackets, bringing intimidation to the streets. To my mind this sense of unreality and uneasiness became associated with the peculiar stench of Russia (which arises I am told from the fish-oil with which the sheep-skins are treated), that stench which pervades the Russian continent from Vladivostok to Reval, and which, when years later I met it again on the Caspian, brought back to my nerves the shambling restlessness of St. Petersburg in 1906.

There exists a legend of the brilliance and gaiety of the society of St. Petersburg during those nine years between the Russo-Japanese and the First German War. I am myself averse from large parties or late hours, and my view may be prejudiced. But to me St. Petersburg society as I saw it was florid and inane. The Tsar and his shy Empress remained at Tsarkoe in domestic retirement surrounded by court functionaries and their own unhappy suspicions. The Dowager

Empress was at Gatchina. At the summit of St. Petersburg society stood the Grand Duke Wladimir and his authoritative wife. Few of the younger Grand-Dukes (since I am speaking of the time before Dimitri Pavlovitch and Sumarakoff Elsten broke upon an astonished world) frequented the *beau monde*. There was Princess Orloff, whose dresses flowed in an uninterrupted stream from Paris, and there was Princess Bieloselsky, an American girl of beauty and high spirits. There was a political salon maintained with some difficulty and grimness by Countess Kleinmichel. There was a small, a very small, sprinkling of literary ladies, who read Paul Bourget in their boudoirs and still went to Baden-Baden in the summer. And there was the diplomatic body, that strange cosmopolitan family, the leading members of which have been bored with each other for thirty years. To this day I recall these parties and receptions with thankfulness that they have ceased. We would have supper at Ernest's, we would go out to Krestovsky, we would hang about the ball-rooms of Embassies, we would drive in sleighs. The walls of all the drawing-rooms and ball-rooms were hung in pink or orange or scarlet damask; let into their silken sides were little brass orifices through which subterranean furnaces pumped blasts of heated air; the double windows were stopped with rubber and padded with cotton-wool; outside the coachmen in quilted coats waited till dawn while the icicles gathered on their beards.

From time to time something would occur to remind me that I was not seeing Russia at all. I took Russian lessons from a young student who had been recommended to my father (and this makes me laugh) by the Procurator of the Holy Synod. He was a tall young Balt with hair like a brown pile carpet and he believed very deeply in the efficacy of universal suffrage. He spoke of this electoral device with almost religious fervour. He explained to me in his clumsy German that it was the only alternative to revolution. And one day he took me to a students' meeting. I retained from that meeting a slight dissatisfaction with that denial of all

enthusiasm which I was being taught at Balliol. Walking with my student one day along the quays I passed a beggar squatting there with his cap beside him. I threw some money into the cap and passed on. My student reproved me for the nonchalance of my gesture; poverty, he explained, was a holy thing and should not be treated with irreverence. I felt ashamed and irritated. Ashamed, since I had not meant my gesture to be off-hand. Irritated by the eternal Russian trick of trying to make the ordinary seem unusual.

Then one day, when I was driving with my father, we heard a loud bang in the middle of the afternoon. On returning home we learnt that a bomb had been thrown into Stolypin's villa on the Apothecary Island and that some of his family had been killed. I went round there immediately. In the trees which lined the canal-side opposite the villa were entangled the lace curtains of the upper bedrooms; the whole front of the house was blown in; and in the roadway were two landaus tilted sideways with their horses lying in a pool of blood. They were carrying stretchers out from the garden and loading them into ambulances. I felt very sick and hurried away. My disbelief in the reality of St. Petersburg society was not diminished by this episode.

What pain and misery and fear has since then crept along those untidy pavements and past those dull red frontages. Even as I write von Leeb's armies are battering at the gates in a desperate attempt to find their winter-quarters. I never felt that St. Petersburg as I knew it justified the gigantic human energies which had gone to its creation. I can only pray that Leningrad will justify the human heroism which is being lavished upon its defence.

5. FRANCE AND BELGIUM*

IT WOULD be an interesting and indeed a salutary task to compile an anthology of false judgements. The wise do not readily commit themselves to prophecy, whereas the forecasts of fools have often proved correct. I am suspicious of the man who says, 'I warned them, but they would not listen,' since such statements are less a proof of prevision than a sign that this man's opinions do not carry weight. Assuredly one of the main symptoms of Winston Churchill's greatness is that he had never indulged in the weak gesture of 'I told you so.' How foolish do all personal forecasts seem in later years! I recall, when I hear bards boasting, a conversation which took place between Samuel Rogers and the young Tennyson more than a hundred years ago. They were walking arm in arm together down St. James's Street. 'How seldom,' remarked Tennyson, 'can any poet be certain of immortality during his own life-time!' Rogers was silent for a moment and then he squeezed the younger poet's arm. 'I am, my dear Mr. Tennyson.' Yet who today reads *Jacqueline* or the *Pleasures of Memory*? In fifty years from now that unfortunate remark may well be the only thing, apart from his breakfast parties, that is remembered about Samuel Rogers.

It is a healthy habit to forget when one was right and to remember carefully those frequent occasions when one's opinion has been falsified by events. I have been re-reading this week my diary for 1940, and especially those detailed passages which record a visit to France in the spring of that tremendous year, which seems today some fifty years ago. I was speaking about Britain's war effort to provincial audiences, and from Paris I went to Châlons, Beaune, Grenoble, Lyons, and Besançon. My audiences were numerous and friendly; I talked to journalists, professors, students, generals, bishops, deputies, business men, prefects, wine-merchants, flower-sellers and hotel-porters; I returned to

*September 26, 1941.

London convinced that, whatever might be the feeble fears of the Paris élite, the provinces were united and resolute. It is only in searching my memory that I can unearth slight symptoms of the malady which but a few weeks later drowned the soul of France.

I can detect four symptoms. First, there was the undue reliance upon the Maginot Line, which a young officer who drove me from Lyons to Besançon described as 'dangerous and perhaps fatal.' Secondly, there was the disgraceful vindictiveness felt by the higher bourgeoisie towards the Popular Front, which was a sign of how far the love of property had corroded the French will. Thirdly, there was the slogan '*Il faut en finir*,' which (had I interpreted it rightly) would have indicated that France was conscious that so great a national effort could not be made a third time. And in the fourth place I heard remarks in clerical circles about 'salvation through suffering,' which (had I been more astute) would have warned me of the coming of *weygandisme* and the dangerous evasiveness of moral rearmament. I was obtuse at the time to all these symptoms. My eyes were filled by the cool corridors of the eastern redoubts and by pale hands placed upon the switches which moved enormous guns. My ears were deafened by the fervour of the students of Grenoble and by the vast blare of the Marseillaise. France seemed impregnable; I could not have believed that within six short weeks such parapets could be submerged.

It may well be that my first judgement was correct and that France succumbed, not to any mortal illness, but to an accident which proved almost fatal. It may be that she is only now recovering from shock and only now coming to view the doctors in her penitentiary, not as magnified saviours dispensing the divine blessings of laudanum and morphia, but as small bewildered men, rendered almost desperate by their own mistakes. When I read *La France Libre*, that flaming torch in the twilight; when I hear the note of passion in de Gaulle's voice; when I listen to 'Les Trois Amis' in the French broadcasts from London, I am

back again in the spring of 1940 and I feel again the conviction that the French will endure defeat, starvation, intimidation and exile in inexorable defence of their own genius and in confidence that the day will come when the boots of the '*ivrogne tudesque*' no longer echo along their streets. And was I so wrong even in surrendering at Grenoble and elsewhere to the excited enthusiasm of the French students? They yelled and banged the desks. Yet only a week ago one of those students came to see me in London. I remembered him well; I recognised his firm grey eyes; he had taken me round the town and up into the hills above. He was wearing the battle-dress of the Free French and carried the soft cap of the tank-corps. He told me how he had escaped. It never occurred to him that anything except events had altered since we walked together in the Dauphiné.

The importance of suspending judgement upon actions and motives regarding which calm evidence is not available has been brought home to me by the publication this week by the Belgian Government of an account of what really happened to Belgium between 1939 and 1940. It is not intended to be a blue-book, although it contains many original documents; it is an objective narrative, written in simple English, illustrated by convincing maps and diagrams, and explaining the inevitable causes which necessitated the Belgian surrender of May last year. It must be always regretted that Monsieur Paul Reynaud, at one frantic moment, should have forgotten the dignity of his heritage and position and have thrown upon King Leopold and the Belgian Army the responsibility for a disaster which was not their responsibility. We in Britain can be glad that our own Prime Minister was less intemperate and advised the House of Commons to suspend judgement until all the facts were known. This admirable little narrative gives us these facts and disposes of many fallacies. It is fitting that the last document printed in its appendix should be headed 'High Court of Justice, King's Bench Division, Sir Roger Keyes v. *Daily Mirror* Newspapers Limited,' and should end with the very generous apology

made by the solicitors of the *Daily Mirror* and with their acknowledgement that King Leopold 'had acted throughout in accordance with the highest traditions of honour and justice'. I am glad to know that the lonely prisoner of Laeken has seen these papers and has learnt that Sir Roger Keyes and the *Daily Mirror* have between them reversed a great injustice.

The Belgian publication is notable also in that it records what is perhaps the most satisfactory snub in diplomatic history. It will be remembered that on October 13th, 1937, the German Ambassador in Brussels, under instructions from his Government, handed to the Belgian Foreign Secretary a note in which he assured him that 'in no circumstances would Germany impair the inviolability and integrity of Belgium, and that she will at all times respect Belgian territory.' At 5.17 a.m. on May 10th the *Luftwaffe* appeared without warning over Brussels and flung bombs upon the Evere aerodrome and surrounding houses. An hour later the armoured divisions of Germany thundered across the Belgian frontier. At 8.30 a.m. on the same day (three hours after the neutrality of Belgium had been violated) the German Ambassador called on the Belgian Foreign Minister and as he entered the room he drew a paper from his pocket. 'I beg your pardon,' said Monsieur Spaak, 'I will speak first.' In a few chosen words he told the Ambassador exactly what he thought. When he had finished the Ambassador again drew the paper from his pocket and began to read aloud the Note which Herr Hitler had instructed him to deliver. It informed the Belgian Government that unless they surrendered immediately the Government of the Reich would be 'compelled to ensure Belgian neutrality by force of arms.' It was at this stage the Monsieur Spaak delivered his historic snub. 'Hand me the document,' he said 'I should wish to spare you so painful a task.'

I envy Monsieur Spaak that moment.

6. LORD D'ABERNON*

EDGAR VINCENT, first Viscount D'Abernon, has died in a nursing home in Hove at the age of eighty-two. It is some years now since illness struck at that magnificent frame, and although from time to time he would dictate letters which displayed the old trenchancy of judgement, yet the last phase of his life was spent in retirement. The picture of him in the lavish prime of his life thus remains for his admirers undimmed by later sadness; we see him always, as in the sketch by MacEvoy, triumphant against a background of blue sky and fleeting clouds, shining in the sunshine, rejoicing in his homeric strength. Few men have been able to gather so fine a vintage from life's varied vineyard. He acquired riches, honours and power; he had been soldier, traveller, banker, politician, and diplomatist; he could estimate and create good literature; his knowledge of art was discriminating and wide; he could speak with sportsmen on their own level; he was intimate with the greatest men of his age; he was an important Englishman at a time when Englishmen were immensely important; and at the summit of his life he was able to mould history into channels which, if adhered to, might well have spared us the insanity in which today we live.

All of us possess a childhood memory which, at the touch of some association of ideas, leaps up vividly from the past, with every detail of shape and light and sound. When I was a child of six Sir Edgar Vincent was Governor of the Ottoman Bank at Constantinople. He had a summer-house close to the waters of the Bosphorus, so close indeed that the waves made sun-patterns upon the ceilings as in the saloon of some cross-channel steamer. In one of the rooms there was an exact replica of a bedouin tent, complete with carpets and accoutrements; at the door of the tent crouched the figure of a bedouin suitably arrayed as if at Madame Tussaud's. I was much alarmed by this figure, since it reminded me of Sir

*November 7, 1941.

Richard Burton, who had startled me at Stübing two years previously by thrusting his swart face into mine and hissing 'Halloa! Little Tehran!' I yelled and yelled. Yet the memory of the Vincent house at Therapia (or was it Yenikeui?) is graced by a far lovelier figure. We were playing hide-and-seek, and Lady Helen Vincent had taken me with her to hide behind some curtains by the staircase. We heard the sound of the pursuers approaching. I squeezed myself into a little ball of excitement, emitting a slight squeak of delight. It is the picture of that moment which has remained to me all my life. Slowly she raised her finger to her lip. I forgot all about my pursuers and gaped up at her in amazement. She was the most beautiful woman that I have ever seen.

The graph of Lord D'Abernon's life assumed strange patterns. I see him first as the handsome Etonian, ambitious and a trifle selfish. I see him as an ensign in the Brigade of Guards, more decorative and extravagant than anything that even Ouida conceived. I see him casting all this London life aside and going out to the Near East as a member of the Rumelian Commission. As a young man he must have been arrogant and even unscrupulous. He loved the Levant but he despised the Levantines; it was in the East that he determined to lay the foundations of his fortunes and his career. There was a certain recklessness about Edgar Vincent which in those days earned him the disapproval of older men. Even when he became Governor of the Ottoman Bank there were those who said that he used his powers unwisely. In my own day upon the hill of the island of Prinkipo there stood a large red hotel, derelict and decaying, which was known as 'Vincent's folly.' He was accused of having wasted the resources of the bank upon this unprofitable investment. Yet there was no reason at all why it should have proved unprofitable, and I suspect that its failure was due, not to the recklessness of Edgar Vincent, but to some intrigue on the part of the little Armenian brokers of Galata, or to some sudden suspicion instilled into the sensitive ears of Abdul Hamid. Then came the Armenian massacres of August, 1896.

A band of revolutionaries held up the Ottoman Bank with hand-grenades and Edgar Vincent was obliged to escape over the roof. In the days that followed some 6,000 Armenians were massacred in Constantinople under the eyes of the Ambassadors. The next year Edgar Vincent left the Levant for ever in disgust.

It might have been thought that in 1897 Edgar Vincent had reached the end of his career and his ambition. He became an English country gentleman. He increased his fortune by wise investments; he sat for seven years as Member for Exeter; and he acquired Esher Place. On the top of the hill there was a large mansion in the French style in which he entertained his many friends and housed his collection of pictures and works of art. At the bottom of the hill, by the river, stood the Tudor tower which was all that remained of the palace in which Cardinal Wolsey had once been imprisoned. It was characteristic of him that he became both a trustee of the National Gallery and Chairman of the Horse-breeders' Association. He received a peerage in 1914, and during the First German War he was Chairman of the Liquor Control Board. It may have been in that capacity, or else in the long years of almost silent service as the Member for Exeter, that he attracted the attention of Lloyd George. The latter seems to have realised at once that D'Abernon's great abilities were being wasted in decorative pursuits. He sent him out on a special mission to accompany General Weygand to Warsaw. And he appointed him our first post-war Ambassador to Berlin. It was this appointment which enabled D'Abernon to show the powers of statesmanship which he possessed.

From the outset his central objective was the restoration of European security. He was the first to see that this object could only be attained by a relaxation of the military and economic clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. From the very day that he arrived at Berlin he sought to secure a settlement of the Rhineland problem and a settlement of the Reparation problem. He received little support from the Government at

home. Again and again did he urge them to take a strong line against Poincaré's policy of destroying the economic stability of the Reich. He well knew that this would lead to inflation and the ruin of the German middle classes, and that from the resultant anarchy would arise an irresistible desire for revenge. He wrote angry letters to Lord Curzon regarding our supine attitude towards Poincaré's occupation of the Ruhr. 'The only wise,' he wrote, 'the only honest and honourable, course is to say: "England will have no part in and no responsibility for what it believes to be wrong."' His words passed unheeded. The calamity occurred. And although thereafter D'Abernon had the satisfaction of seeing his ideas embodied in the Locarno Treaties, in the Dawes and Young Plans, and finally in the Lausanne agreement, yet he would always remark sadly that these excellent transactions had occurred at least three years too late.

The Germans of the Weimar Republic were awed and startled by Lord D'Abernon. It seemed unbelievable to them that the Ambassador of a victorious Power should appear completely unaware that any victory had been won; it seemed extraordinary that an aristocrat of such lavish elegance should scribble notes upon his evening shirt. He would stride about his panelled study at the Embassy, dictating to his secretary Mr. Whelan, telephoning to Ministers, asking the Chancellor to modify some note to Poincaré or to appoint Schacht as Governor of the Reichsbank, telling statesmen, bankers, journalists exactly what they ought to do and say. Their gratitude to him was sullied by the grub of jealousy which lurks in every German rose. Stresemann alone was great enough to appreciate D'Abernon's high spirit. 'It is strange,' remarked Stresemann to his Cabinet in 1927, 'it is strange that you gentlemen should have so few ideas now that Lord D'Abernon has left.' I asked the man who told me this story how the other Ministers had taken so acid a phrase. 'We thought it unkind,' he said, 'but true.'

7. WAR NERVES*

ALL WARS, in that they are by their nature nonsensical, are a strain upon the common sense of the ordinary civilian. The events themselves (the occupation, for instance, of Oslo, or the forcing of the Perekop isthmus) are so highly improbable that one's accustomed estimate of the probable becomes distorted. In times of peace the mind is able to find some relief from present anxiety by projecting itself into the immediate future; in times of war even our day-dreams are apt to turn into nightmares, and anticipation brings but small relief. Our minds are buffeted by the dark storm around us, and between our present endurance and the anchorage of peace is interposed the barrier of the immediate future. Against this barrier our hopes as well as our fears splash vainly; it looms unlighted and impenetrable across our course. It is inevitable that under the pressure of present pain and future anxiety our nerves seek to escape from this circle of distress, and that through the incidental vents and apertures of our present experience should be discharged a greater nervous force than in peace-time would seem to us either reasonable or fair or wise. In every war the ordinary civilian has tended to escape from essential problems by exaggerating the importance of unessential problems, and to exploit the latter as some counter-irritant wherewith to diminish the central aching pain. At the time of Marathon the citizens of Athens, we may well suppose, allayed their central terror at the onrush of the Persians by accusing their fellow-citizens of making a corner in garlic or olive-oil, and it was most human of Xerxes, nine years later, to scourge the Hellespont with chains.

What is so interesting to the observer of public conduct in war-time is that these tangents along which the civilian mind seeks to escape from central anxiety are demonstrably different in successive wars. A distinct type, or rather

*November 14, 1941.

symptom, of neurosis is created every time. I am prepared to believe that in the Crimean War the commissariat and medical services were highly inefficient and that the sufferings of our men were great. Yet it was somewhat of a shock to me to realise that the Crimea, which I had been taught at school to picture as an ice-bound peninsula as harsh and inclement as Spitzbergen, was regarded by the Russian nobility as their own Riviera, and that the villas of Yalta (which the Germans have occupied this week) were luxuriant with mimosa and with pine. I am prepared to believe that the Turkish barracks at Scutari were ill-adapted to serve as hospitals for British soldiers and that Miss Nightingale acted with courage and authority. Yet I often wonder whether the degree of emotion discharged by our grandfathers upon the inclemency of the climate and the clemency of the lady with the lamp was not to some extent a release from their central irritation against a war which in their hearts they felt to be unnecessary, which was strategically undramatic, and in which the long grey lull in front of Sebastopol had begun to get upon their nerves.

The Boer War, again, constituted the greatest humiliation which this country had endured since the American War of Independence. A few brave men, such as David Lloyd George, faced the central problem and denounced the war openly as something predatory and wrong; they suffered much for their courage. Others endured in silence, gnashing their teeth in rage at seeing their country exposed to the obloquy and ridicule of half the world. But the mass of the population sought escape from these glum verities by sliding along two different tangents. The first was jingoism and the second was abuse of the War Office. Our jingoism took two forms, a mass-form and a personal form. The bands played 'The Soldiers of the Queen' or 'The Absent-minded Beggar'; the C.I.V. paraded amid much shouting through the streets of London; we were deeply moved by the skill with which the naval guns were adapted for land warfare; we lay awake thinking of the heroic garrison at Ladysmith; and when

Mafeking was relieved a wave of shameful hysteria swept the country. Apart from this mass-emotion there was a form of personal identification which was not repeated in later wars. I was at my private school at the time, and we each of us, from the first day of the war, identified ourselves with a personal hero. Mine was Sir Redvers Buller. I adopted this particular hero, since my cousin had once known his niece. I bore his portrait proudly in a small glazed button attached to the lapel of my coat. And when he lost his guns at Colenso I retired to the lavatory and shed hot tears of shame. I must even then have had a passion for lost causes, since I wore my Buller button defiantly even after Colenso, even after that unfortunate general had returned home upon indefinite leave. Yet in my heart I envied my more prescient school-fellows whose button-holes were graced by the more triumphant images of Baden-Powell, Methuen or Sir George White. And by the end of term the glaze upon my Buller button became chipped in the defence of my hero and a large section of the general's face showed brown cardboard underneath.

Apart from our clamorous rejoicing at the non-existent prowess of our generals and our armies, we comforted ourselves by asserting that everything which was not quite perfect was the fault of the War Office. I am prepared to believe that our General Staff had not with any marked accuracy foreseen the probable nature of a war in South Africa or the skill, equipment and versatility of the Boer commandos. Yet it seems strange on looking back across this gulf of years to realise that the public fury aroused by our disasters did not centre upon Joseph Chamberlain, Cecil Rhodes or the financiers, but almost wholly upon the dim and bewildered generals in Pall Mall. I can well recall, as a little boy, driving down with my father on his way to the Travellers' Club. We passed that distraught and huddled building where now stands the French frontage of the Royal Automobile Club. 'That,' said my father, 'is the War Office.' I gazed at it in fascinated horror; it aroused in me the same feelings of awed

repugnance with which, at a later date, I gazed upon the Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Broadmoor, or even later at the Brown House at Munich. In that building, I was convinced, was housed the cause of all our distress.

The special form of neurosis which attacked the public during the last war was neither sentimentality, jingoism, hero-worship nor unreasonable abuse of the War Office. It was a particularly unpleasant brand of suspicion which took the form of spy-mania. Harmless people with German names, origins or connexions were suspected of making gun-emplacements in their gardens or signalling with torches to the approaching Zeppelins. The public nerve-storm dealt even wider and more reckless ravages. The wife of the Prime Minister was criticised because, to her lasting honour, she continued to be kind to a German governess who had been with her family for thirty years. A minor member of the Government was forced to resign office because his wife had visited a German prisoner at Donnington Hall. And a citizen of Sevenoaks of reputed German origins (he was, in fact, engaged at the time on highly confidential work for the Ministry of Munitions) was suspected by his neighbours of having presented public baths to the town for the sole purpose of providing the Germans with a fine concrete foundation from which they could bombard London. It is to our credit that during the present war this senseless form of cruelty has been almost wholly discarded. Our present neurosis (and it is respectable enough) is what is known as 'frustration.' Countless men and women are rendered sad or angry by the feeling, either that they are not wanted, or that the functions which they perform afford insufficient scope to their own ability or experience. It is interesting to consider why this sense of frustration (inseparable as it is from any phase of extreme national effort) should in this war have become so inflamed. I suggest two main reasons. On the one hand, the public as a whole are conscious that this, unlike previous wars, is a total war, or, in other words, that the life of the community is at stake. The desire for intense national

effort reflects itself in a desire for intense personal effort, with the resultant sense of inadequacy of opportunity. On the other hand, this urgent desire for action is confronted by the fact that the initiative still rests with our enemies, and the consequent feeling of national ineffectiveness reflects itself in a feeling of personal ineffectiveness. In other words, the feelings of personal frustration from which so many millions are now suffering is a reflection of national frustration. If this be true, then the frustrated can derive some comfort; the lull-period will not last for ever; and the time will come when the initiative passes to us.

8. THE DISMISSAL OF WEYGAND*

THE RESIGNATION of General Weygand is a portent, the full consequences of which it is still impossible to forecast. 'After fifty-six years of public service'—so ran the Vichy communiqué—'General Weygand retires into private life.' It would be foolish were we to imagine that the General has retired of his own will. It is not in his character to abandon responsibilities at the hour of danger: he is not that kind of man. I have known Weygand well. I knew him in the days when he would seek to accord his swift footsteps to the slow strides of Marshal Foch. I knew him when, under the distressing rule of Poincaré, he struggled to reconcile his loyalty to his superiors with his loyalty to his former allies. I saw him when he had become Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies, when he had become more worried, more authoritative, more sedate. Being convinced of his integrity, I think I can understand his point of view. As a fervent Catholic, he may well have believed that France could be regenerated through suffering; as a strategist he may well have felt that the defeat of 1940 was complete and irremediable; as a soldier his sense of obedience to his military superiors was such as to seem excessive to the civilian mind; as a patriot and a man of honour he was willing to carry out the terms of the armistice, but to grant no more. His dismissal implies that the Government of Vichy, for thirty pieces of silver in Reich currency about to behave dishonourably. And by the time these are words appear in print Admiral Darlan may have gone to Fontainebleau and signed away his country's honour. The effect of this upon the relations between Vichy and the western democracies will be serious indeed. And the loyalty of those of us who believe in France will be subjected to strain.

Our first duty is to *understand*; and in order to do that we must place ourselves in the position of the ordinary decent Frenchman resident in France today. Let me transpose the

*November 28, 1941.

circumstances. Suppose that in the autumn of 1914 the Germans had in fact broken through to the Channel ports; that by the employment of some new device or manœuvre they had sunk the British fleet and reduced us to a condition of impotence; that they had then landed at Southampton and Dover, occupied London and forced Mr. Asquith's Government to accept terms of abject surrender. Supposing that at the time we had been convinced that Germany's victory was not local merely but universal, and that no other country, after our own collapse, could possibly hold out against the rush of German victory. And supposing that at the supreme moment of our national disaster Lord Roberts had emerged above all politics and parties, determined to save something at least of our honour and independence, and embodying in his person not merely our pride in our past, but our belief in the essential virtues of our national character. Would not the average decent Briton in such circumstances have been prepared, when all else had failed him, to place his confidence in this incorruptible veteran? And would not the slogan have passed throughout our towns and villages, 'We have been let down by everybody else, but we trust old Bobs to make the best deal he can'? Surely something like that is what would have occurred.

Let me pursue my parable. Supposing thereafter that one and a half million of our men were taken as prisoners into Germany and held there as the hostages for our collaboration. Their captivity would not merely drain the very life-blood of the country, but would bring poignant and ceaseless sorrow to countless homes. To many of us it would seem that nothing on this earth was more important than the return to us of our sons and lovers; that no imaginable evil could be greater than this galling separation. Supposing also that as the price of non-submission the enemy remained in occupation of our capital and industrial areas, that the fruits of our labour were taken from us, that we were mulcted of vast sums for the profit of our foes, that all political action or discussion was prohibited, and that at every hour of the day, in Press and

wireless, the voice of the tempter whispered to us 'Surrender, and all these evils will pass.' Supposing also that we were exposed to hunger, bombardment and darkness; that we were constantly assured that these added evils came to us from our would-be liberators; that we had lost all confidence in our own institutions; that we had lost even that self-respect which is the buttress of pride. In such circumstances would we not also, the ordinary decent Britons, be tempted to find excuses for further subservience? Examine your hearts and find the answer. And when you have found it, agree with me that the fact that 80 per cent. of the people of France refuse collaboration and long only for the victory of Britain is a fact which shows that the spirit of France remains a fine and formidable thing.

I am not suggesting that Marshal Pétain is in himself comparable to Roberts of Kandahar. The latter had a noble nature: Pétain does not possess a noble nature. He was a defeatist in 1917; he was jealous of Foch; he is governed by vanity, pessimism, envy and ambition. I have heard it said that Pétain is the only truly happy man in France today. He has now removed from his vicinity the one man whose criticism, even if unspoken, must have been a constant suggestion of reproof. Weygand recalled to him the sturdy patriotism of Foch. He must be glad that Weygand is no longer there to recall the great days, and that he can now settle down to his prizegivings without a spectre at his foolish feasts. How pleasant for this vain man to feel that his words, so long disregarded, are now potent in the history of his country. Yet that is not the point. The point is that he is regarded by many millions of his countrymen as symbolic of the highest French virtues. I do not pretend, moreover, that the French propertied classes share the fine spirit of the French people. I well know that French politics had become septic and that the lobbies of the Chamber of Deputies, and even of the Senate, were dark drains in which the sewer-rats grew fat. I know that those French industrialists who clustered round the 200 families and the Comité des Forges were many

of them blinded to patriotism by their terror of the Freemasons and the Jews. I know that there are many ambitious men in France today who throng the corridors of the Hôtel du Parc at Vichy and seek to build their careers upon the ruins of their country's reputation. I am aware that there have been some instances of treachery even among the intellectuals. Drieu la Rochelle, for instance, has allowed the name of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* to be prostituted to the slimy solicitations of Friedrich Sieburg. A few writers, such as Montherlant, have allowed their gifts to serve the two defeatist doctrines of the ivory tower and self-humiliation. Yet I also know, in every fibre of my being, that when these men ceased to be patriotic they ceased to be French. I know also that the winds which thunder across the great plains of France will in the end sweep away all such impurities and that the wounds of France, in spite of the filthy cohort of flies that now cluster round them, will not turn gangrenous. They will heal.

My preoccupation is not with those who follow Darlan or who serve Sieburg. It is with the ordinary, decent Frenchman who (stunned by disaster and confused by suffering) falls back upon the traditions and loyalties of the French army as the purest element in his national life. Such people saw in Weygand the symbol of their beliefs. To them he seemed a soldier of the great period, who was prepared to accept defeat but not dishonour: and who interpreted his duty, and the duty of France, as that of unquestioning obedience to the head of the State. How will such people, such simple minds, react to the dismissal of Weygand and to the policy of which it may be the prelude? Do they realise that it may mean war on the side of their enemies against their friends? Will they even then continue to believe in Pétain? We must remember that the French are more insular than we are, and that even the soundest doctrine becomes suspect for them if it comes from abroad. We must expect also that Darlan will enforce his policy by police-methods. In Deloncle and his hooligans he may find an instrument as potent as that which Himmler

used, and the rubber truncheon may smash, and the spy lurk and whisper, in the gentle towns of France. We in this country underestimate the apathy which comes from surrender, the cynicism which comes from loss of self-respect, the moral degradation which terrorism and elation can induce. Two things are clear. The duty of the Free French is to compose their differences in face of a coming danger. And our duty, whatever happens (and appalling things may happen), is to remember always that Vichy is not France: and that France is necessary and superb.

9. WOMEN IN DIPLOMACY*

IT IS a curious fact that although women have now enjoyed political power for over twenty years they have not yet decided to what political function they are best adapted. I am not referring, of course, to those fierce mothers of the revolution who still wear next to their skin the hair-shirt of woman's suffering throughout the ages, and who still feel, in the manner of Eire, that the oppression of centuries absolves them from all co-operative thought. I am not referring to those foolish virgins who believe that the two sexes are in some way similar to each other and who waste much valuable time in the role of male impersonators. Still less am I referring to those egoists who flaunt and twitter like parakeets upon the platforms of public life. I am referring to those many admirable women who have taken the suffrage not as a victory or an adventure, but as a very grave responsibility, and who in the last twenty years, both within Parliament and outside it, have done much splendid work in many ways. It would be admitted that in the present House of Commons there are women (such as Ellen Wilkinson and Florence Horsburgh on the Government side, and Eleanore Rathbone as an independent) who have made a specifically feminine contribution. They have contributed a peculiarly feminine brand of zeal, sympathy, courage and intuition. Yet even they might wince at my use of the word 'feminine,' supposing that I have used it as a term of half-dispraise, whereas I, in fact, have used it to suggest that there is some specific quality which women can contribute and which men cannot contribute. For surely we should now have reached the stage when sex-rivalry should be as out of date as the wars of religion, and when sensible people should be agreed that men and women should become complementary to each other and should abandon all foolish competition. Let me quote again what was written by one of the wisest women I have ever known.

*January 23, 1942.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf (nearly thirteen years ago) wrote as follows: 'All this pitting of sex against sex, of quality against quality; all this claiming of superiority and imputing of inferiority, belong to the private-school stage of human existence.' It is surely time that we should at least begin to think about the differentiation of function between men and women; and, that we should think of it as a joint and complementary effort and not in terms of taking sides.

I have been impelled to this protest by reading in the newspapers a statement attributed to Miss Thelma Cazalet in regard to the entry of women into the British Foreign Service. Some five months ago a deputation of women called upon Mr. Eden and asked him to admit women into the Diplomatic and Consular Services on the same conditions as men. Mr. Eden, after prolonged consideration, has replied in negative terms. Miss Cazalet announces that she will endeavour to get this decision reversed. Yet surely Miss Cazalet must realise that, of all public functions, diplomatic functions are those for which women are least well adapted. In the first place there are certain practical difficulties which cannot be swept aside. There is, for instance, the problem of marriage. Is perpetual maidenhood to be imposed upon these women diplomatists, and, if not, what happens if they marry their colleagues, or even outsiders? The functions of an ambassador are important and well defined, but I can conceive few more otiose positions than that of the Ambassador's husband. Alexandra Mikhailowna Kollontay has, I believe, exercised with great efficiency her functions as Soviet Minister in Stockholm. But in her case the problem of Mr. Kollontay was solved by his absence. For many generations, moreover, there will remain posts to which, for climatic reasons or owing to local prejudice, it will not be possible to appoint women envoys or consuls. The more progressive countries would doubtless be glad to receive women as members of the diplomatic and consular bodies, but the more backward countries will be less broad-minded. A feeling might arise, therefore, that the more agreeable posts (in terms of civilisa-

tion, propinquity or climate) were reserved for the women members of the service, whereas it was the men who were sent to the back of beyond. I cannot feel that such differentiation would be in the interests of the Foreign Service as a whole.

These practical difficulties might well be overcome were it felt that the specifically feminine qualities of zeal, sympathy and intuition were useful qualities for a diplomatist to possess. I assert that these three qualities, unless kept under the firmest control, are dangerous qualities in international affairs. When Talleyrand (one of the most brilliant and experienced diplomatists that the world has ever known) inculcated into his attachés the motto '*surtout pas de zèle*' he was not making an epigram but condensing into four words the lessons which he himself had learnt. Sympathy, again, is a quality which tempts people to identify themselves with the passions and causes of the countries in which they live, and thereby to diminish the value of the counsel which they supply to their home Government. And intuition all too often leads diplomatists to jump to conclusions which are subsequently falsified by events. I should aver even that the feminine type of man (by which I mean something wholly different from the effeminate type of man) does not in practice make the best diplomatist. He is apt to identify himself, in terms either of love or hatred, with the people among whom he lives, and to espouse their causes and rivalries to an extent which is detrimental to his function of representing British interests in a particular area of the world's surface. The ideal diplomatist should be impartial, imperturbable and a trifle inhuman. These are not feminine qualities; they are male qualities.

I am well aware that the cultivation of these three qualities produces in the professional diplomatist a habit of colourless scepticism which is highly irritating to all who meet it. He dreads zeal so acutely that he comes to identify it with effort; his mistrust of sympathy becomes so ingrained that his heart is as a despatch-box, to be opened only by a special key; his impartiality is so diffused and equable that he regards even

the most impassioned causes as the twitterings of starlings in the thorns; and his dislike of intuition makes him slow to accept ideas. I do not believe, however, that these grave defects can without danger be remedied by the injection of feminine enthusiasm into the Foreign Service. Women will do well in the Foreign Office at home: they make excellent foreign correspondents: but not diplomatists. I believe that the necessary reforms are those which I understand are contained in Sir Malcolm Robertson's report and which Mr. Eden is anxious to bring into operation. The fault of our Diplomatic Service in former days was that the young were given too few opportunities and that the old were far too safe. As a result, the more energetic among the young members tended at a certain stage to drift off into other professions, whereas those who remained felt assured that so long as they avoided zeal, sympathy and intuition they would in the end obtain their Embassy or their Legation. By the fusion of the Diplomatic with the Consular Service the Secretary of State will have at his disposal both a greater number of posts and a greater number of people. The old disadvantage, under which there was too little chance at the bottom and too much chance at the top, will thereby be largely removed. The young man, who in former days became either impatient or inert as an eternal Secretary of Embassy, will derive new zest from being appointed Vice-Consul at Adana or Hamadan. The older man will learn that, unless he takes more trouble to be active, and up to date, he will end, not in some comfortable Legation, but in premature retirement at Westonsuper-Mare. I feel certain that by these methods a magnificent Foreign Service will gradually be created; but it will never be a service in which women will find the most useful scope for their genius.

10. FOREIGN NAMES*

HORACE, WHEN one comes to think of it, was a most remarkable man. The fact that he was able, without becoming either a snob or a toady, to master his own social disadvantages shows that his common sense amounted to genius. Venusia can scarcely have been a school for courtiers, and there must have been a prolonged phase in Horace's life when he spoke with a strong Apulian accent and was none too natty when it came to eating eels. Even if one discounts the reaction against the patricians which set in during the reign of Augustus (as during our own Tudor period), it is remarkable that the son of an ex-slave should have established with a man like Maecenas relations of such affectionate intimacy. My respect for Horace's character may have led me to attach exaggerated weight to his pronouncements upon human conduct. For years I have taken it for granted that he was correct in stating that men were less excited by what they heard than by what they saw. Since becoming connected with the B.B.C. I have had reason to revise this judgement. *Lenius excitant*, indeed . . . nothing can be further from reality. People can read a thing without so much as a twitch of the eyebrow, yet when they hear the same thing upon the wireless they foam and shout with rage. It would be improper for me to examine the more important aspects of this phenomenon, since the comments which I could make upon the matter might cease to be marginal. Yet there is one subordinate symptom of this great neurosis of the elderly in their relations with the wireless which, without impropriety, might well be discussed. It is the symptom of nervous derangement provoked in quite sane people by the correct or incorrect pronunciation of foreign names.

I claim that I have some right to discuss this symptom, since I am myself, I honestly believe, immune to the disturbance by which it is evoked. It might well occur, for

*January 30, 1942.

instance, that some friend or announcer were to mention the capital of Persia and to pronounce the word 'Teeheeran.' Now I was born in Tehran, have lived there for some years, and retain for the place that pang of home-sickness which is familiar to those who have experienced the silence of Persia, the silence of time and space. Yet when I hear my birthplace mispronounced I am not conscious of any nervous disturbance. I might, I suppose, experience a movement of elation, and feel flattered in my self-esteem on discovering that, whereas I know how to pronounce the word 'Tehran,' the announcer (who in all other matters is so far better informed than I) does not. Conversely, I might feel annoyed that a place so famous in song and story should be rendered on the wireless in an incorrect and indeed ridiculous form. I do not, in fact, experience these stirrings either of pleasure or of pain, since I realise that, although I happen to know how to pronounce 'Tehran' or even 'Veliki,' I had no idea, until informed by an enraged rubber-planter, that Khota Baru was pronounced, not 'Khota Bahru,' but 'Khota Baroo.' The irritation so widely aroused by mispronunciation is, I suppose, due, not so much to vanity, as to the almost intolerable sense of frustration which now weighs upon the middle-aged. If one yearns to place a life-time of experience at General Auchinleck's disposal, one finds, I suppose, some slight relief in getting very angry when the 'u' in Senussi is pronounced short instead of long. And if that in truth be the explanation, then I for one am indeed ready to receive all the slings and arrows of such outrageous fortune. But some general principle, none the less, must be sought.

It is impossible, in practice, for men to agree upon any general rules for the pronunciation of foreign names. The French, and to some extent the Italians, being logical and insular, make few concessions to any foreign tongue, and pronounce place and proper names as if they formed part of the French or Italian languages. This rule, sensible though it be in theory, is not in practice always workable. If, for instance, the announcer on the Rome-Milan wireless were

uncompromisingly to refer to 'Kurkil,' a great majority of his listeners would imagine that he was speaking, not of the father of our victory, but of some obscure town in Turkestan. I question whether a French student, intent upon visiting the homes of Napoleon III, would find the booking clerk at Charing Cross immediately responsive were he to ask for a ticket to 'Cheese Le Urst.' An Italian visitor to London would lose much time were he to ask a taxi-driver to take him to 'No. 42 Kay Appsiddey.' The purely phonetic method does not, in fact, lead to ease either of conversation or transport. I remember being asked on one occasion by a French lady-journalist whether I had been deeply influenced by the works of 'Benachot.' I replied that I was completely ignorant of that writer. It was only from her astonishment that I gathered that I had been misled by her phonetic rendering of the illustrious name. I have been assured also that there was once a foreign student of the English language who remarked to a friend that in the newspaper that morning he had come across a word which seemed so strange to him that he was unable to understand it. 'And what was the word?' his friend asked. 'Lowoffoly,' he answered. 'But there is no such word in the English language,' his friend protested. 'But there is,' the foreigner insisted, 'I read it in the newspaper this morning.' I leave it to the ingenuity of my readers to identify these fruits of the phonetic method.

If, therefore, we admit that some concession at least must be made to the fact that foreign names are foreign, is there any general system which can be devised to increase conviction and diminish rage? Everybody, I suppose, would agree that there are certain foreign names which are so familiar as to have become part of the English language, and that such names should be pronounced as if they were as English as Rickmansworth. Nobody but an ass, for instance, would pronounce Paris, Berlin, Prague, Amsterdam, or Copenhagen in an un-English voice. There are, however, a number of other names which, although familiar, are not yet completely anglicised, such as 'Lyons,' 'Calais,' 'Mar-

seilles' and 'Rheims.' There are foreign names which, although little known in this island, are accorded an eccentric rendering by local British residents, such as 'Algeciras' and 'Salonica.' There are many places again which we have been taught to mispronounce at school and which we have since learnt are pronounced quite differently in their home towns, such as 'Vladivostock,' 'Sebastopol' or 'Smolensk.' And, finally, there are the countless names with which we are not ourselves familiar but which we know from experience are probably not pronounced in their own language in the same manner as we pronounce 'Worthing' or 'Stroud.' Should we, for instance, say 'Neaster' or 'Dniéstr,' 'Jerrez' or 'Chereth'? Most reasonably modest people could, I suggest, answer these problems for themselves. In nine cases out of ten, for instance, I know in my own soul whether I am seeking solely to convey my meaning or whether I am also seeking to impress people with a wide command of foreign languages. On this basis, three general rules could, I suggest, be devised. (1) Names which ought to be known to the ordinary child who has passed school certificate should be pronounced in the English way. (2) Other names should be pronounced in such a way as to enable the ordinary listener to identify them upon the map. (3) When in doubt remember that no foreign name should ever be pronounced in such a way as to indicate superior erudition, taste or delicacy on the part of the speaker. How easy all that sounds! Yet am I really in future to speak about 'Callis' and 'Reams'? And will the Oriental expert really be satisfied if the announcer talks about 'Pa Levi'? Much more modesty and unselfishness is, above all, needed both on the part of those who speak and those who hear.

11. BRITISH VERSUS GERMAN HUMOUR*

I WAS reading recently in *Die Zeitung* (that intelligent newspaper which is published in London) an article by Hans Karl Ibben entitled 'Have the Germans a Sense of Humour?' Herr Ibben begins, as is natural, by dissociating the Germans from the Nazis and by asserting that the latter (as is proved by the pages of the *Brennessel*) possess no sense of humour at all; they possess only a marked capacity for invective. It is evident that a mind as taut and rectilinear as is the Nazi mind can admit of none of those agreeable fluctuations from intentness, of none of those gay curves of comparison or association, in which the English mind so constantly swerves away from its central, and often painful, preoccupations. It might be argued also that a sense of humour is the first of all trappings to be discarded by a nation in its moods of revivalism or when hypnotised into a belief in its own historic destiny. We ourselves, during our Puritan period, passed through a similar phase of glumness, and one can scarcely imagine Milton making jokes against himself. Nor is it difficult to understand how a system which is yearly becoming more theocratic, which inculcates a dramatised conception of the heroic, should have banned all flippancy from the sparse furniture of its mind. It may be even, as Herr Ibben indicates, that the most useful function at present performed by Reichsmarschall Goering is that he attracts to his own person those flashes of ridicule, which if deflected to other Nazi leaders might assume a less affectionate, and therefore more harmful, form. A sense of humour is not among the virtues or indulgences which one could expect the Nazis to enjoy. Does this mean that the Germans are only temporarily and incidentally being deprived of a sense of humour, or is it that the German character does in its essence lack this emollient wherewith to salve the smart of German history?

*February 6, 1942.

Herr Ibben is not wholly clear in his mind regarding the difference between a sense of humour and the capacity for wit, invective, irony, ridicule or nonsense. Nobody could deny that the Germans have a native wit, although it is seldom as incisive as French wit, and seldom as imaginative as the wit of the Americans. Their capacity for invective is outstanding. The irony of *Simplicissimus*, in those happy days when Munich was the home of German gaiety and not of the Brown House, was of a high and distinctive quality. And no admirer of Wilhelm Busch, of 'Max and Moritz,' or of the Frau Wirtin saga could deny that the German gift for nonsense is one of the qualities which bring them closest to ourselves. I agree also with Herr Ibben that the Germans possess an exceptional capacity for ridicule, and I am grateful to him for the illuminating analysis by which he shows how the German sense of ridicule differs from that of other nations. He calls it '*gutmütiger Spott*,' good-humoured mockery, and he claims, quite rightly, that it is differentiated from other forms of ridicule by three constant characteristics. (1) It is directed against somebody else and not against oneself. (2) It never becomes so pointed or personal as to create offence. (3) It is associated with convivial occasions and as such must never offend against '*Gemütlichkeit*,' by which he means the sense of ease derived from friendly company. Thus whereas the German is an adept at attacking his enemies in the form of invective, although he enjoys quizzing other people in the form of good-humoured mockery, yet he refrains from ridiculing his friends, and above all himself, to a point where self-respect might become involved. In fact, what prevents the Germans from possessing a sense of humour is their morbid and eccentric conception of personal status, or, as they so madly call it, 'personal honour.'

When I compare Herr Ibben's three constituents of German humour with my own memories of German gaiety, I find that he has illumined for me an area of perplexity. How often (walking back under the small trees of the Tiergarten) have I wondered why it is that the German sense of

the ridiculous, although in so many respects identical with our own, is yet different both in extent and texture. Herr Ibben has suggested an explanation of this problem. Is it not that, whereas with us humour is a permeating fluid in the mind, for the Germans it is an attitude deliberately allocated to certain moods? Once the correct setting has been organised, once the required '*Stimmung*' has been evoked, then the Germans feel that they must have humour according to plan—'*Spass sein muss.*' The German's conception of his own place in the universe is never a humorous conception, and is generally a tragic conception. If he be an optimistic person he regards himself as a heroic character, capable of magnificent deeds; if he be a pessimistic character, his gloom assumes Aeschylean colours, and he sees himself as Prometheus suffering acutely and symbolically for the sins of all the world. No German ever thinks himself 'funny' as I think myself funny when (dressed in a fur coat) I run after a bus. No German, when confronted by circumstances of pomp and grandeur, indulges in an affectionate chuckle at his own incongruity. No German will tell a comic story against himself unless he can so twist it as to render it oblique self-praise. No German has the self-assurance, in other words, to deride himself. Is this a quality or a defect? May it not be that, in stating that the Germans have an admirable sense of the ridiculous but do not allow it to affect serious thought, or effort, we are stating that the Germans have a surer sense of values than we have ourselves?

We are proud of our sense of humour, and there are moments when we become a trifle conceited about it. At its best, it certainly does indicate a balanced instinct for proportion and a wise conception of the proper relation between the individual and the community, between the short span of private life and the immensities of time and space. It is also a symbol of our self-confidence which (however blind or unwary it may appear to foreigners) does give us a great power of resistance. Our British pride, the '*superbia britannorum*,' may well lead us to complacency, but it is none the

less a rich capital inherited from a successful past, and one on which in times of stress and scarcity we can batten for a while as a hibernating bear upon its fat. Yet we delude ourselves when we imagine that our sense of humour is really all-pervasive. It is often little more than an arrogant indifference to those particular items of criticism which we do not happen to mind. The moment any outside criticism hits below the flannel belt of our sense of humour we become every bit as touchy, as '*leicht beleidigt*,' as the Americans or the Germans. We do not really enjoy being teased about our optimism, our hatred of mental effort, our empiricism, or our sentimentality. We consider such criticisms to be in execrable taste. Is our sense of humour, therefore, no more than a defensive apparatus, no more than an excuse for mental flabbiness? There come moments when I hold that destructive view. Then something happens which crashes through my scepticism and proves to me that our sense of humour is in fact a magnificent instrument of discrimination. Such an experience occurred to me on Thursday of last week. Mr. Churchill had reached the peroration of his speech. '*I have finished*,' he said, and as he said the words he flung his arms downwards with his palms open. In any other Assembly such a gesture might have seemed apologetic, expiatory, despairing or grotesque. To the House of Commons, with their corporate sense of humour, and therefore with their corporate sense of the difference between the ridiculous and the sublime, Mr. Churchill's gesture meant what it was intended to mean—'*I am in your hands*.' For it is a sense of humour which teaches men to discriminate between the histrionic and the dramatic, between the grandiose and the grand.

12. COLONEL BLIMP*

IN THE *Evening Standard* of last Friday I observed with pleasure a cartoon by Low depicting the death and burial of Colonel Blimp. I was glad to feel that this stale old man was at last to be laid to rest. But when I examined the cartoon more closely I noticed that, whereas Sir Stafford Cripps was conducting the funeral with stiff decency, Low himself (in the guise of a grave-digger) was evidently determined to exhume the Colonel so soon as Sir Stafford's back was turned. I should be sorry indeed if Colonel Blimp were to be with us throughout the remainder of the war. For although I should be the last to disparage attacks upon the inelastic mind, yet I do not feel that in a very dangerous war it is profitable constantly to suggest to amateurs that all professionals are fools. I do not blame Low for having invented Colonel Blimp. The cartoons which centred around that grotesque figure were amusing and useful for the first three hundred times. Nor do I question the cartoonist's habit of distorting proportions. It is the misfortune of all caricaturists that, in snatching at an eccentricity, they create a type. I am merely appealing to Low to permit this old bore to rest in peace. Colonel Blimp, if the truth be told, is a figment of Low's mind. I am prepared to believe that when he was a lad at the Boys' School, Christchurch, N.Z., David Low really did imagine that Colonel Blimp existed in real life; I am prepared to believe that at Sydney, or in the boat which brought him from Australia to Fleet Street, he did in fact encounter an old gentleman whose moustaches and opinions suggested to him the elderly grotesque whom he has, year in and year out, rendered so distressingly familiar. I suppose that were I today to comb this island with the finest of combs I might find seven or even eight old gentlemen who really did exclaim, 'By gad! Sir!' and who really did hold and express the fantastic views which Low attributes to the late Colonel. Yet I should wager that

*March 6, 1942.

out of my eight discoveries, six at least would prove on investigation to be, not colonels, but unsuccessful publicans, actors or insurance agents, who in the course of their self-indulgent but frustrated lives had never experienced either the benefits of education or that modesty which comes from ruling other men. Colonel Blimp is as much a freak as the man who tames spiders and whispers endearments to them in the dark. Yet by constant repetition Low has managed to convince many men, women and children that the Colonel is in fact representative, not merely of the unenlightened in life and politics, but of authority itself.

The defect of mockery as a form of ridicule is that, although it may begin by assailing the ridiculous, it all too often ends by damaging standards which are not ridiculous in the least. Mockery rapidly extends its original area of incidence, even as a drop of oil will expand over a sheet of clean paper. A contemporary example of this expansive tendency in mockery is the joke (which is still current in many circles) about the 'old school tie.' It began, justifiably enough, as an attack upon that wholly useless member of society, the man who remains for ever a schoolboy and who still regards as interesting and important the prejudices of the playground or the judgements of the Lower Fifth. Such infantilism is clearly useless and deserved attack. By imperceptible stages the 'old school tie' joke expanded into a criticism of our caste-system of education, and was exploited by those who had never been at a public school to diminish the prestige and check the arrogance of those who had enjoyed that trying luxury. Here again the ridicule was justified and salutary. Few people can contend that democracy can function for long when the people are divided into educational castes, differentiated from each other in manner and accent, and possessed of no common cultural background. Since then, however, the 'old school tie' joke has spread even further, and is used to deride, not merely the conventions and machinery of our public school system, but the ideals and values which must be the basis of all sound education. The oil has seeped across the

paper, until learning and scholarship themselves become affected, and until the humanities themselves are regarded as a form of class-ostentation. The time is even approaching when the imputation of 'boy-scoutishness' or the 'old school tie' may affect those moral values which, so far from being the privilege of any class, are in fact the great unifying principle which binds together the divergent particles of our community. The 'public school spirit' was a desirable code, which was well adapted to our national temperament and which did set a common standard of gentleness and virility. It enjoined courage, patriotism, truthfulness, loyalty, modesty and tolerance. The 'old school tie' joke, which began as a criticism of incorrect values, has spread so widely that it may become an excuse for the denial of correct values. The ponderous fantasy of Colonel Blimp has swollen into a vast excuse for deriding authority and justifying disobedience; the 'old school tie' joke may, unless we are alert, spread into an excuse for disloyalty and defeatism. In war there can be no excuses.

The danger of all silent revolutions (such as that through which we are now passing) is that they sap confidence without creating ardour. There is a theory that only 'revolutionary armies' can win great wars. This is absurd. Are the Dutch members of a revolutionary army? Were the men who in 1914 fought without artillery at Gheluvelt and Zonebeke, and thus saved the Channel Ports, at all conscious that they were fighting for any revolutionary idea? Were their sons who resisted so ferociously at Calais, or who brought off the coup of Bruneval, inspired by any sociological purpose? Were the French who defended Douaumont and saved Verdun preoccupied with any class or party alignments? A revolutionary spirit may have led to Valmy, but it also led to Brest Litovsk. Even if this fantasy were true, it would not be possible for us to change so many horses in so torrential a mid-stream. But it is not true. The root of all military efficiency is discipline, and discipline, if rightly understood, is an organised pattern of confidence. The men who fought at

Calais obeyed their orders since they were confident that their leaders would not demand this sacrifice of them unless it were worth while. They had no conception that by their courage they would save the army at Dunkirk; they were given strict orders, and they obeyed them to the death. Yet if that great baboon Colonel Blimp had been allowed to intrude between their own bitter emergency and their confidence in their commanders, then in truth resolution might have been shaken and courage sapped.

The 'revolutionary army' legend is a dangerous legend. Does any person with experience of actual warfare really believe that Rommel's men, when they found themselves surrounded and it became obvious that their enemies possessed overwhelming air-superiority, really comforted themselves by the thought that they were fighting for the New Order or that they were selling their lives for the Führer, Reichsmarschall Goering, Herr Himmler and Doctor Goebbels? They thought nothing of the sort. They were fighting for the honour of the German Army coupled with the additional inducement that if they retreated unnecessarily they would be shot. Did the men who surrounded the Germans at Staryia Russa really inspire themselves, as they slipped through the darkness upon their skis, with the truculent portrait of Stalin? Not in the least. They thought only of surrounding the Germans with greater skill and courage than their enemies possessed. And did the men who swayed down upon Bruneval in the moonlight really consider deeply the comparative merits of Winston Churchill and Stafford Cripps? Again, not in the least. Battles are not won by sociology, still less are they won by excuses; they are won by discipline, skill, confidence and courage.

13. EIRE IN WARTIME*

THE ENGLISHMAN who visits Eire today is liable to false impressions. Unless he has had long experience of Irish ways, or unless some rivulet of Celtic blood dances in his veins, he may tend to deduce from appearances conclusions which are incorrect. Everybody seems so amicable; everything appears so similar. Within a mere handful of minutes he passes from England in wartime to Eire at peace. The windows of his aeroplane are shrouded in butter-muslin; a few gentle bumps tell him that he has left England, and before he has read more than a chapter or two of his book a few further bumps tell him that he has arrived in Ireland. Propelled invisibly across the sea, he sits there in a leather arm-chair, until the door which had closed upon a wide green field in the Midlands opens again upon a wide green field near Dublin. The air is soft, and the voices of the men who hold the gangway strike on muffled ears. The officials who stamp his passport, the officials who inspect his luggage, are calm and courteous. He climbs into the bus provided by the company; he passes shops and villas identical with those of Bath or Worcester; he drives along Dorset Street; he arrives, with no awareness of any marked displacement, in the heart of Dublin. The staircase of the club where he lunches might be some staircase in Portland Place; above the mantelpiece hangs a list of members who were killed in the last War; the illustrated papers are spread upon a side-table; a carton of London cigarettes lies in the grate; and from the window he looks upon sooted railings, upon the statue of a statesman surrounded by black privet-bushes, upon a perspective of Georgian frontages, upon a replica of Brunswick Square. That night, maybe, he dines in Trinity College. The hall, the portraits, and the silver flicker in the candle-light; were it not for the brilliance of the conversation he might believe himself to be at Oxford; and when the decanter has

* March 27, 1942.

slid round the polished table the Provost rises and gives the toast of the King. Assuredly the visiting Englishman might make false deductions.

It is not by candle-light or in terms of Adam ceilings that one should examine, and seek sympathetically to understand, the mood of Eire. It must be irritating for Irishmen to notice with what readiness the visiting Englishman assumes that an identical layer of architecture and decoration, a joint employment of English words and lettering, implies a common cultural background. It must be infuriating for them to observe the patronising smile of the Englishman when he dismisses their language (which is, in fact, a symbol of intense patriotic energy) as a purely artificial and illegible disarrangement of consonants. The unpopularity of Englishmen among those who do not appreciate their gift of generosity is often due to our national habit of smiling when we do not understand. Foreigners interpret as derision what is little more than a quirk of shyness, or the giggle of the Englishman when confronted with the unfamiliar. Many modern Irishmen are quite prepared, in spite of their ferocious memory, to let bygones be bygones, and to establish with us relations of sound and profitable neighbourliness. They become discouraged when an Englishman takes it for granted that the vestiges of the past bear some relation to the passions of the present or the hopes of the future. There are few Englishmen today who would seek to reverse the Irish clock, since as a race we possess a highly developed sense of the impossible. I wish, however, that there were more Englishmen who understood that the inhabitants of Eire are fundamentally different from ourselves, that their passions are deeper than ours, their memories more retentive and their thoughts more nimble. I advocate no surrender to sentimentality; I agree that we must protect our own rights and interests with the utmost tenacity; but I contend that if we cease noticing similarities and try to understand differences we may (perhaps even within the lifetime of the present generation) establish with Eire relations of lasting amity and trust.

It is more than forty years since I stayed for any time in Dublin. Much of my childhood was passed in the atmosphere of Irish controversy, whether in County Wicklow or in County Down. The echo of the animosities aroused reached me only as a dim murmur of conversation to which I was not supposed to listen, and which I was not supposed to understand. Two incidents alone remain in my memory, one of the North and one of the South. During one Ulster holiday we had been given an air-gun, and for a target we had cut from packing paper the figure of a human being, to whose breast we attached, as a bull's-eye, a scarlet paper heart. We pinned this figure upon one of the farm-shed doors, and expended upon it all the ammunition we possessed. The old carpenter who was, as I now realise, a fervent Orangeman, applauded us as he passed. 'Ah, I see,' he said, 'you have got old Gladstone there. Shoot him in the heart.' Our target bore no resemblance to Mr. Gladstone, or, indeed, to any recognisable figure either public or private. My own feelings for Mr. Gladstone (upon whose knee I once had sat) were favourable feelings. Yet such is the infection of fanaticism that I was pleased by the carpenter's approbation, and experienced the glow of patriotic achievement. The second incident occurred near Dublin, under the shadow of the Wicklow mountains. We had driven out to some horse-show or gymkhana, and I had been entranced when the carriage left the road and bumped on squeaking springs across the grass. There were many other carriages around us, and my grandmother (who was both sociable and alert) kept peering under her parasol from right to left. Suddenly she placed her hand on my knee. 'Look,' she said, 'look at that lady there in a dog-cart.' I saw a woman in a gay hat and tight bodice sitting in a yellow dog-cart with huge wheels; some men were leaning over the mudguards talking to her. 'That,' said my grandmother, 'is the woman who defeated Home Rule—Kitty O'Shea.' I can still see that woman in the dog-cart, but whether or no she was in fact Mrs. O'Shea, I have no conception. I remember these two incidents, since there was passion behind them; yet

of the nature of that passion I remained ignorant for many years.

Those were the days when the Lord Lieutenant would drive in state to the Horse Show with the sunshine glistening upon the varnish of his wheels. Those were the days when the nobility and gentry would entertain each other with a series of garden parties, when the band would play *Pinafore* on the lawns, and when the marquees would be palaces of sugared cakes and strawberry ices. Those were the days when peaches were heaped in silver bowls, and when the footmen brought in the seed-cake and the marsala at the same moment as the butler brought in the English mail. My grandmother would take me sometimes to the garden parties; she never took me to Kilmainham gaol. Squat and sinister stands that little Bastille, and the friend with whom I went there last week showed me how, when he was an inmate, the prisoners would signal from the barred windows to the women waiting on the bridge. Over the door of Kilmainham the architect has inserted a sculptured allegory of the serpents of vice and discord being bound in chains. That is a cruel emblem of a violent past. It would be a mistake for the visiting Englishman to remember nothing of that past beyond the tunes from *Pinafore* and the strawberry ices. It would be an equal mistake for him to assume that bitterness is an eternal emotion, to become angry because the citizens of Eire are so different from ourselves, or to resent their mystical attitude towards their own neutrality. The Irish are an incomprehensible race, and seem fated to be misunderstood even by themselves. But I have a feeling that in the end they would prefer the old familiar complaint of being misunderstood by England to being misunderstood by Germany or even by the United States.

14. RONALD CARTLAND*

IN HER memoir on Ronald Cartland which has just been published,[†] Miss Barbara Cartland refers to his dismay, on entering the 1935 Parliament, at realising the gap left by those who fell in the last war. Lord Baldwin, it is true, was consistently sympathetic to the younger men who had come to infuse new blood into the Party; Sir Austen Chamberlain spared no pains in acting as the interpreter of age to youth; Mr. Amery was unflagging in his encouragement of the ambitious young; and Mr. Churchill was then, as ever, himself a member of the younger generation. Yet Ronald Cartland, on entering the House of Commons in those dark days of December, 1935, became acutely conscious of the gap left by the 'lost generation,' and of the 'unbridgeable gulf' which yawned between the younger members and the veterans of the Conservative Party. 'The left Conservatives,' he confessed, 'are immeasurably nearer to the right Socialists than they could ever be to the older members of their own party.' I question whether Ronald Cartland, had he survived to experience the Churchill-Eden-Cripps epoch, would have felt that the gulf was so unbridgeable. He was a rebel by nature and he chafed exceedingly under the discipline of the Whips. Yet the Conservative Party knows well that it has always been rescued by its own heretics, and even as Ronald Cartland began as a recalcitrant at Charterhouse and ended by being one of the most polished head-stones of the corner, so also, had he but survived, would he have been regarded as one of the more shining hopes of Tory Socialism. His death in battle has given a sharp meaning to that loveliest of all Latin words, the word '*desiderium*,' a word which implies both the vivid memory of an enchanting presence, and the dull ache of disappointment that his absence brings.

No man can have sat in the present House of Commons

* May 1, 1942.

[†] *Ronald Cartland*. By his Sister. (Collins. 12s. 6d.)

without becoming conscious, as Cartland became conscious, of the damage done to us by the loss of those who fell in the First German War. We have been unable, as Hitler and Mussolini have been able, to fill the thinned ranks of the middle-aged by a phalanx of young men and women trained to a fanatical purpose and welded by a ruthless discipline. Our younger generation have been given neither the exhilaration of personal opportunity nor a compelling sense of function; and those who might have served as the interpreters of the past to the future were decimated at Gallipoli or on the Somme. How often have I sat there in the Chamber, peopling the benches with those of my own contemporaries who were killed. The Balliol generation of 1909-1913 has become almost legendary, nor do I feel on looking back that their legend was unmerited. They possessed talent, courage, and beauty, and their autumn might well have proved as rich and lovely as their spring. Charles Lister, Patrick Shaw-Stewart, Edward Horner, and the two Grenfells, each one of these, either by talent or personality, appeared to us exceptional men. Lister, with his untidy body and his tidy mind, would assuredly have made for himself a great position in political life. Shaw-Stewart, whose gifts of scholarship and imagination had already been applied to high finance, would certainly have exercised power. Edward Horner remains in our memory as a figure of almost unimaginable grace. And when I close my eyes I can still see Julian Grenfell striding sunlit with his greyhound down the Turl. Is Ronald Cartland also to join these inheritors of unfulfilled renown?

Ronald Cartland was in some ways a typical product of his age. He believed, as many others who were not Conservatives believed, in the feasibility of Tory Socialism. He believed with passionate intensity that with intelligence and faith it should be possible for us to create a rational England and to level out the inequalities which our system had inherited from the past. Emotionally, he was tortured by the condition of the working classes and by the feeble palliatives with which the administration sought to allay the worst

iniquities of the distressed areas. He believed also that our political genius was so vivid and our political experience so ancient that we could achieve the modernisation of our system without destroying all that was more valuable and significant in our heritage from the past. These views were shared by many of those who accompanied him to Westminster in 1935, and Cartland differed from them only in the greater passion, the intenser energy, the more unflinching courage which he brought to the cause. Yet in other respects he was in fact exceptional. The tepid water of their beliefs was in him raised to boiling-point. He was able to avow and to affirm the then unfashionable doctrine of patriotism. He had a fervent belief in our Imperial mission, and he desired us to assert that mission on every occasion with fortitude, integrity and power. His affection for the Junior Imperial League was based upon his belief that in it could be fused the twin objects of socialism and empire. 'They recognise,' he said of them, 'that Imperial Democracy can survive only if each citizen accepts willingly the responsibilities which Empire and Democracy, separately and together, entail. By precept and example they set out to make men thrill again with love of Country, once more to give them pride in their dearest possessions, to give them faith in Britain's destiny.' Those were unusual words for a young man to use in 1937; Ronald Cartland believed in them with every fibre of his being; and three years later, on a hill near Cassel, he gave his life. That supreme surrender was the only surrender of which Ronald Cartland would have proved capable. He was more than an example to his fellow-members; he was a lesson. And to the timid souls among them his presence, his high nervous fortitude, rankled almost as a reproof. His was a combative nature, and his eternal enemy was what he called 'the closed mind.' He aroused much transient irritation, much passing resentment, and has left behind him durable respect. Above all, he stood out from his contemporaries, who were so widely disillusioned and so often mute, in his conviction that his theory was not only correct but also practicable. He was that

amazing phenomenon: a young man of the post-war generation, who actually believed in himself. He gave us faith. 'And when you ask,' he wrote, 'what do we want out of Life? That question *should* only be asked by you of yourself. It can be answered only by you. In other words—or written in a word—*Faith*.'

Few of those who heard it will ever forget Ronald Cartland's speech on the motion for the adjournment on August 2nd, 1939. Mr. Chamberlain had suggested that the House should adjourn for the summer holidays until October 3rd. There were many members who felt that the situation in Europe did not warrant so protracted a holiday. Mr. Chamberlain was adamant. He went so far as to say that he would demand a vote of confidence. 'The question is,' he said in a tone of much asperity, 'whether you trust the Government or distrust the Government.' The House became angry and perplexed. Few members wished to challenge, still less to overthrow, the Chamberlain administration at so critical a period. Yet they much resented the fact that their consciousness of crisis and their desire to resume their session at an early date should have been interpreted as a personal attack upon the existing front bench. Ronald Cartland had left the Chamber, and some of his friends went to find him. He ran gaily along the corridor, and in a few minutes, tense and impassioned, he was on his feet. His speech was totally unprepared, and when one reads it in cold print the flame and fire are lost. He was interrupted by one of the senior Members for Birmingham, who shook his white locks at him in sorrowing reproof. Cartland had committed the greatest of all heresies; as representing a division of Birmingham he had dared not only to challenge the party whips but to affront the sacred name of Chamberlain itself. Ronald Cartland turned upon his aged mentor. 'Within a month,' he said, 'we may be going to fight.' He paused for an instant, vibrant with indignation. 'And we may be going to die,' he added. The House gasped in stupor. We shall for ever remember him as he was at that moment: defiant, faithful, devoted and brave beyond compare.

15. VANSITTARTISM*

IN THE May number of *The Nineteenth Century* there is an article by Lord Vansittart upon the important and most topical subject of 'vansittartism.' In this article the author of *Black Record* tries to cleanse his original doctrine from the many falsifications which have since accrued to it. The scholiasts, the journalists and the appeasers have each of them accused Lord Vansittart of saying things and meaning things which in fact he neither said nor meant at all. They have represented him as saying that all Germans are steeped in sin and as implying that the only solution of the German question is to sterilise the young and to massacre the old. Lord Vansittart has never either entertained or published such ideas. He has merely pointed out that the past record and present character of the German race suggests that modern Germany is more pugnacious, and therefore more dangerous, than any other European country; that if we assume that this pugnacity is confined only to a minority of convinced National Socialists we are making an assumption which is not only incorrect but dangerous; and that when we have gained our victory we should be wise to take precautions to secure that Germany is not again able to build up a huge armament industry and thereby to face the world with another war. I have known Lord Vansittart for more than thirty years, and my attitude towards him may be coloured by the respect and affection that I feel. But even if I did not have full reason to trust Lord Vansittart's judgement, experience and humanity, I should not regard his doctrine as disordered, embittered or unsound. I admit, of course, that it is most unpleasant to discover that what one hoped might be a sheep-dog is actually a wolf; I admit that there will be many sheep who, in the face of so disturbing a discovery, will seek to reassure themselves by repeating incantations such as 'appearances are deceptive' or 'I met a wolf in Cracow once

* May 8, 1942.

who was a perfect pet.' But what I cannot understand is why, when a gentleman who has been a keeper at the Zoo for nearly forty years warns us that a given animal is apt to become violent, the public should accuse that benevolent zoologist of being wicked, alarmist and unkind.

Lord Vansittart, it must be admitted, has presented his facts and his opinions in an un-English way. He has arranged his material and his arguments with natty precision as if he were setting out knives and forks and plates and spoons upon a deal table; one can hear them rattle as he lays them down. The English do not like this sort of thing. They do not like their information or their ideas to have the sharp shine of cutlery; they like them to possess the soft dimness of bluebells in a wood. The logic of Lord Vansittart's doctrine is irresistible, and when an Englishman becomes logical he is at once regarded by his countrymen as eccentric and unsound; the implications of his doctrine suggest that this country will either have to shirk its duty or else maintain a tense level of energy and unselfishness over many years. Such a continuance of effort is horrible to contemplate, and the ordinary English mind winces away from it, away from the hard high road and into the coppices where the bluebells scent the air with the cool breath of tiny hyacinths. It is very comforting to suppose that the present war is due entirely to Hitler, Himmler and the rest, and that when once these have been disposed of we shall get back again to the dear little Germanies of 1848. It is most discomfoting to face the hard fact that unless we can defeat the German armies and discredit the German military tradition we shall not have won the war. It is depressing to realise that when this most trying war is over we shall still have in front of us a further long period of strain and duty. It is much more comfortable to imagine that as soon as the swastika is torn down the Hitler Jugend will in a single night become as docile as Jehovah's Witnesses. Lord Vansittart tells us most unpalatable things; and we therefore seek to discredit his arguments, either by twisting them into false shapes so that we can call them fantastic, or

else by attributing his attitude of mind to prejudices and passions which he does not in fact possess.

One of the favourite dodges for discrediting vansittartism is to repeat such phrases as 'one cannot generalise about a nation of eighty millions' or 'human nature is the same at bottom.' I see no sense in such evasions. It may be true that some dogs behave like cats, even as it may be true that some bull-dogs behave like greyhounds. Yet in practice it is wiser to assume that it is in fact possible to generalise about the character of a cat as about the character of a dog, and that most bull-dogs are liable to behave like bull-dogs and not in the very least like greyhounds. Nor do I really believe that human nature is the same at bottom. The British and the German natures are, for instance, very similar on top; but when one gets below the surface differences appear which are fundamental to the understanding either of history or of the problems of our own future security. It is unreasonable, moreover, to assume that a man like Lord Vansittart, who all his life has been brought into constant intimacy with foreign individuals and countries, should allow his matured political judgements to be affected by incidental personal feelings or experiences. The man who has lived much abroad, who has been on terms of intimacy with many men and women of different nationalities, and who has studied and absorbed the art and literature of different peoples, is not much affected by momentary impressions. He comes to learn that every country can contribute something specific to his own interest or pleasure, and that the art of profitable foreign intercourse or travel is the art of discovering what is best that any city can provide.

I, for one, like all foreigners, but I do not pretend to like them all equally. I like the Americans best, and then the French, and then the Germans, and then the Italians, and then the Greeks, and so on through a long list. I do not dislike the Americans because they are boastful; I like them because they are warm-hearted. I do not dislike the French because they are bad-tempered; I like them because they are very

intelligent. I do not dislike the Germans because they are suspicious and jealous; I like them because they are interesting companions. I do not dislike the Italians because they are theatrical; I like them because they sing when they sell vegetables. It is as silly to seek for our peculiarly English qualities among foreigners as it would be to order eggs and bacon at La Pérouse. All this like and dislike business is beside the point; if I knew the Japanese (which I am glad to say I do not), I would certainly find among them some virtues to appreciate and admire; and the fact that I like German virtues even as I like Italian virtues does not mean that I would not sacrifice my property and my life rather than let the Nazi or the Fascist doctrine triumph over the earth.

I do not therefore say, even as Lord Vansittart does not say, that all Germans are wicked. Such a statement would be ignorant and absurd. But I do say that a very large number of Germans are cursed with a ductless gland which generates envy, suspicion, rancour and pugnacity. Hitler's revivalism has inflamed this gland to an extent which envenoms all the world. By careful and considerate treatment after the war we may do much to ease the inflammation. It will be a difficult task, since we shall have to re-educate a whole generation. But until we are quite certain that the Germans have passed beyond that stage of pugnacity which so distinguished our own Elizabethans, we must take precautions to prevent the poison becoming active again. We must see to it, even at the cost of prolonged effort, that Germany has no further opportunity to rearm. The mistake we made in 1919 was to impose upon Germany a number of humiliating restrictions and thereafter to close our eyes tightly to the fact that these conditions were not being observed. We caused the maximum of irritation while maintaining the minimum of control. Foch, in the most realistic manner, pointed this out at the time, but his warnings were disregarded. We must not make the same mistake again. In other words, Germany should be denied no opportunity, other than the opportunity of starting a Third German War.

16. OUR DEBT TO RUSSIA*

I HAVE been both touched and disconcerted of late by realising with what depth of emotion the men and women of this country centre their hopes upon the Russian front. I do not find, in addressing audiences whether in London or the provinces, that they respond with more than perfunctory approval to commendation of our own prowess by sea or land or air: nor are they vividly mindful of the stark dangers through which we have passed or even of the gratitude which we owe to those who, under the inspiration of a heroic leader, saved Britain when she was crippled, battered and alone. I do not find that they recognise the fact that the selfless, the almost reckless, help given in the hour of trial by our Dominions, our colonies and our dependencies is a proof that our Imperial mission has not been ill fulfilled. The refusal of occupied Europe to surrender either to blandishments, starvation or police terrorism (a refusal which at a later stage of the war may prove of real strategical importance) is taken (unwittingly, ignorantly, selfishly) almost for granted. A reference to the struggle in which our Chinese Allies have for so long been engaged provokes but a surface ripple of condolence; while a statement of the vast power which the United States are so rapidly, and at such sacrifice, accumulating for final victory arouses among English audiences but a few perfunctory nods of acquiescence. Yet one has only to mention Russia and the whole meeting flames as suddenly as a wisp of hay drenched in paraffin; one feels upon one's cheek the wind of the winds of passion. Akin to this uncalculating enthusiasm was that aroused among progressive people by the first victories of the French revolutionary armies. It had all seemed so hopeless at first, and liberal Europe groaned aloud when the troops of Rochambeau and Lafayette flung down their rifles and bolted at the very sight of an Austrian patrol; when the armies of the Duke of Bruns-

*May 22, 1942.

wick were with eighteenth-century leisure advancing upon Paris; when they had already reached the defiles of the Argonne. Then came Valmy and thereafter Jemappes. Startled subalterns of His Majesty's regiment of foot guards would find themselves addressed in Cheapside as 'citizen soldier' and many merchants of the City of London had their signet rings engraved with the semblance of a cap of liberty upon a pike. Then followed Neerwinden and the long phase of disillusionment which slid insensibly into the Napoleonic wars.

Our debt to the Russian armies and people is one which we should keep for ever in our consciousness. It is not merely that they have destroyed a large portion of Hitler's troops and equipment, it is also that they have dealt a heavy blow to the legend of Hitler's infallibility. Whatever be the outcome of this war, the chapter of its history which Mr. Churchill has called 'The glory of Russia' will always form a chapter which will be read with thankfulness and awe. The magnitude of the Russian achievement in destroying so many Germans, in throwing the German armies back from Leningrad and Moscow, in removing so much of their own munitions industry across congested lines of communication, blinds many of us to the extent of the losses which they have sustained. Their casualties have been appalling; their war-potential has been severely hampered; and Hitler's armies have within five months occupied an area of former Russian territory approaching twice the size of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland combined. It is unfair to Russia to concentrate upon the glory of her resistance without giving careful thought to the grave sacrifices in men, material and territory which that resistance has entailed. It is unfair to our own people to assure them that the campaign of 1942 is certain to be an exact replica of that of 1941, or that when the sleet of next October howls across the steppes Hitler will inevitably find himself with another two million casualties and still deprived of his winter quarters and his oil. We can all believe that within the next three months the Russians

will once again be able to inflict crippling losses upon the Germans; but that belief must be tempered by the consideration that such a result will only be achieved by almost superhuman effort on the part of the Russians and ourselves. If at the end of August the German armies and air force are still battering in vain against a wall of Russian might, then indeed we may cherish the great hope of an early and decisive victory for the United Nations. But if that hope be unfulfilled, or only partially realised, then we may regret that so large a portion of our people have regarded Russia as almost the sole guarantor of victory, and have not realised with sufficient clarity that in the West proportions of power are also being assembled which, although through long and arduous paths, will also ensure the German downfall.

The clamour for a 'second' front is inevitable and (as the Prime Minister pointed out in his recent broadcast) in some ways salutary. But it does not proceed from any acute understanding of the strategic or transport position as it exists today. In the first place we are already fighting upon three fronts, in the Atlantic, in the Pacific and in the Middle East. In the second place the assistance given to Russia by the presence of our armies in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Iran is both useful and contiguous. And in the third place the public underestimates the substantial sacrifices being made in providing Russia with a stream of British war material across the northern or the southern routes. It is necessary also to bear in mind that if Hitler fails to crush Russian resistance during the next three months he may well hesitate to commit his people to a second winter campaign in snow and ice. His reference to a second winter in his recent Reichstag speech had about it a flavour of insincerity. It is more probable that if he fails this summer to achieve a decisive victory over Russia, he will strive desperately to extricate himself from his difficulties by offering most lavish terms. He has always shown himself an extreme opportunist, nor would he hesitate, if he deemed it suitable, to reverse his whole anti-bolshevik crusade as he reversed it in August, 1939. We must remember

that Hitler (who has small regard for the property or independence of others) is in the position if necessary to offer rich rewards to Russia in return for an eastern peace. He could promise to give her, if he wins, not the Straits only, but the Persian Gulf, and the whole Empire of India. What counter-offers could the United Nations oppose to such extreme generosity?

I agree with those who say that the Russian Government and people will never accept defeat. Their resources are still overwhelming; their courage remains superb; the hatred which the Germans have aroused is as a furnace which cannot easily be quenched. The danger is rather that Hitler, if he fails to achieve a decision by September, may cut his losses and admit that, in so far as the Eastern front is concerned, it is Russia who has gained the victory. It is irksome to say these things, since in the present public mood they may be misinterpreted. Such is the state of public enthusiasm that the gentlest drop of caution hisses horribly as if it had fallen upon molten metal. I shall be accused, I suppose, of displaying an anti-Communist bias. I have no such bias and I have always wished, both that the Soviet experiment should have a fair opportunity of passing through difficulty into success, and that our own people should have more occasion to study the practical working of that experiment first hand. If it were physically possible I should much like today to see a group of Soviet foremen working in British factories and a group of British foremen working in Russian factories. My purpose is certainly not to presage disappointment or to criticise a gigantic social experiment. All I regret is that so many of my countrymen should have put all the eggs of their war-mindedness into the Russian basket. It is a splendid basket, a sturdy basket, a basket which may well bring all our eggs to market. But it is not the only basket. There is our own little basket, which has proved both taut and tough, and of which we ought to be prouder than we are. And there is the American basket, strong, expansive and capacious, which could and should house many, many millions of eggs.

17. THE SMALL SHOPKEEPER*

SWIFT in his last years, happening to turn the pages of a book which he had written in his prime, groaned aloud and exclaimed, 'Great God! What genius I had when I wrote that!' I suppose that when one becomes very old indeed, or when the bats of mental decay begin to fidget in the attics of one's mind, one does indeed look back upon one's younger self as upon someone wise and resolute and clear. I have not as yet reached that stage of senility, and in fact I am often startled, when I look back upon the self of only a few years ago, to find my lips curling into a smile of affectionate pity for anything so ingenuous, so innocent and so young. I was nearly fifty years of age when I first entered Parliament, yet when today I recall the days of my initiation, my mouth forms the motion of a loving smile, and I see myself as a mere stripling with the milk of Balliol still wet upon his lips. In those dew-drenched, dawn-golden days it had in fact seemed to me that no occasion could arise when I could ever hesitate as to the correct course to pursue or the correct view to take. My original formula appears to me today to have been almost fantastic in its ingenuousness. It ran as follows: 'You have no political ambitions and you possess certain specialised information and certain rigid principles. When subjects arise which are either outside your range of knowledge or which do not conflict with our principles you will vote obediently on the side of the party which you support. In all other matters you will speak or vote according to your own convictions.'

I soon found that the business was not in the least as simple as all that. My first discovery was that my loyalties were multiform, and not uniform. I had a loyalty to my constituents, another form of loyalty to my local association, a third form of loyalty to the National Government, a fourth form of loyalty to those in the House who seemed to share my outlook, a loyalty to my own experience, to my own principles,

*May 29, 1942.

and to my own interpretation of the public good. My second discovery was that my convictions were not themselves always uniform. Again and again have I found a divergence between what I *feel* and what I *think*, between my sympathies and my reason. I am involved today in a typical conflict of this nature. It concerns the small shopkeeper.

Before the House rose last week for the short Whitsun recess there was an excellent debate upon this very subject. I regret that this debate did not obtain the publicity that it deserved, since the debates on the two previous days had not shown the Mother of Parliaments at her most motherly or wise, and since this short debate on retail traders displayed the true virtues of that fine assembly. On the one hand you had knowledge, in the shape of members who had themselves been retail traders, and could speak from first-hand experience; on the other hand, you had liberal-minded men who discussed the problem from the point of view of principle rather than of practice. The subject is still largely academic, since the Retail Trade Committee appointed to examine into the matter and to make recommendations has as yet only furnished interim reports. Yet had there been a vote on the issue I should have found it difficult to decide my own attitude. To abstain from voting always leaves one with a sense of frustration, and while the others file into the lobbies one remains upon the bench, trying hard to look righteous, but, in fact, sharing a sense of humiliation with the worm who has not the stamina to turn. Yet to vote against the Government in these disintegrating days, even if the vote be on an incidental matter, suggests lack of confidence in leaders in whom, in fact, my confidence is deep and strong. Nor have I as yet, in this matter of the small trader, been able to disentangle my thoughts from my feelings, or to present myself with a clear cut issue of 'yes' or 'no.'

My feelings in the matter are quite definite. I find myself heart and soul on the side of the small shopkeeper. The President of the Board of Trade would doubtless assert that he abundantly shares these human sympathies; in fact, he

proclaimed recently that the small retailer was 'the backbone of the nation'; I should be happier had his words not had about them the formal compassion of an obituary notice, and did I not feel that, owing to the pressure of economic circumstances almost beyond the President's control, the nation is in danger of losing this particular backbone. Even numerically the small traders today occupy a central position. As Dr. Russell Thomas pointed out in the debate, they stand today in a very large majority. Whereas the co-operative societies possess some 12,000 shops, whereas some 27,500 shops are owned by the chain stores, the retail traders number as many as 960,500, representing some 3,000,000 people either engaged in, or dependent on, the retail trade. Nor, if we are to take the figures published in the *Board of Trade Journal*, has the starvation period yet been reached; by and large the retail trader is still doing fairly well. But that is not the point; the point is that he cannot possibly, if present conditions persist, continue to do fairly well. Every week that passes some assistant or some partner is called up for National Service. Supplies are diminishing, and it is inevitable that in the present shortage of commodities and transport that the wholesaler should seek to simplify his daily problems by selling to the large shop rather than to the small shop.

Thus, as the interim report of the Committee points out, a situation of serious gravity is rapidly developing, and unless something be done the small trader will in the next few years almost certainly disappear. A few businesses, which deal either with highly specialised trades, or are under very competent direction, may survive the blizzard. But many thousands of excellent people will find their shelves becoming emptier and emptier, and will have to face the disappearance of their savings and the ruin of a lifetime of decent work. One might accept their elimination as a tragic outcome of war and post-war economics; yet it is impossible unless one is a determinist to contemplate without deep dismay the ruin of a class which in the past has conferred such benefits upon the community. The ultimate effect may be more serious even

than the loss of something good; it may entail the emergence of something bad; for even as inflation destroyed the German lower middle class, and thus opened the door to Hitlerism, so also may the squeezing out of the small retailer present us with a solid core of penury and subversive resentment.

There are those who contend that these are but idle tears, and that it is as sentimental to bemoan the fate of the little shop as it was in 1850 to grow soppy about the dear old coaching days. I see no analogy between the two occurrences. I think of my own village shop, the proprietor of which is a man of enterprise, constantly providing new things. I think of a widow in my own constituency, who is by no means the unhappy derelict of a receding economic age, but a woman of great capacity who exercises a wide personal influence upon her neighbours in the working-class streets around. Such people are in no sense survivals; they are efficient and valuable human elements in contemporary society. I admit that if we are to have a planned economy after the war it will be easier for both Government departments and wholesalers to deal with the great combines than to bother about the isolated and often muddle-headed retailer. I admit that the consumer may get cheaper and better material from the chain stores or the co-operatives. I admit that it may be both sentimental and reactionary to dread the coming of the Woolworth age. I agree that we had far too many small shops before the war, and that their number must inevitably be drastically reduced. But both my heart and my head tell me that the social and even the economic value of this class of the community should be more clearly appreciated; and that the Government should devise plans for registration, licensing and co-operation which should enable the efficient small shopkeeper to remain in existence. A defeatist policy towards this most serious problem will assuredly lead to the extinction of a deserving and valued element in the country; but it should still be possible to rationalise without having to destroy.

18. SHAKESPEARE'S FLOWERS*

DRIVING BACK the other evening through the northern suburbs I was startled by the beauty of the flowering trees in the gardens of Golders Green and Hampstead. As seen from the top of an omnibus (that swaying parapet of delight) they seemed to pour cascades of scent and colour on the streets. It is not merely that this intemperate spring has been specially favourable to spring blossom; it is also that the trees and shrubs planted in the suburban gardens have this year for the first time attained to full maturity. Most of the new varieties (the double plums and cherries, the pyrus tribe, the coloured quinces, the heavy French lilacs, the admirable improvements on the too emphatic laburnum) have only become available to the ordinary gardener since 1920. Until this year they were too young to display their full beauty, but this May they swayed and clustered with adult richness. We have always been the best gardeners in the world, and even in savage days the Anglo-Saxon used and named five hundred different varieties of plants when Apuleius could only think of one hundred and eighty-three.

But we have not always maintained that high level of gardening taste which was ours before the eighteenth century and which today is ours again. There have been six main phases, or fashions, in English gardening, and the new vogue for flowering shrubs may mark the seventh. There was the old English tradition, which may well have come to us from Roman days, and which survived until the time of Charles II. Then arrived the French fashion of Le Nôtre, and with it the craze for architectural as opposed to horticultural design. The Dutch manner followed in the school of Vredeman de Vries, to be replaced in its turn by our landscape gardeners and the devastations of Kent, Brown and Humphrey Repton. The Victorian phase ensued with pampas and laurel, and thereafter the admirable natural gardening taught us by William Robinson, Miss Jekyll and Vicary Gibbs. The vogue

*June 5, 1942.

of the flowering tree and shrub may well mark a seventh and most welcome stage.

Although we have gained much since former days, yet I regret that some of our gardening habits should have been forgotten. The mediaeval garden bench was made of turf, or camomile or peppermint raised upon brick supports. That was a charming device which even in our now wetter climate might still be revived. We have lost also the old agreeable passion for arbours and tunnels, and we miss from our gardens the long alleys of sweet briar and honeysuckle trained to an arcade. Mounts, also, were a valuable feature, and where (as at Knole) they still survive they offer a pleasant link between the flower garden and the outside world. We have lost the art of *treillage* which the French still use so prettily, and which forms a quick and graceful background to any new garden. I wish also that we could revert to the days when garden paths were made of thyme, pennyroyal and burnet. Nor do I feel any hostility towards palings as an incident in formal beds. But most of all do I deplore the disappearance of our English vineyards. There was a time when even this damp island was a wine-producing country and the Saxons used to call October the 'wyn month.' As many as thirty-eight vineyards are mentioned in Domesday, and one can still trace the old vine terraces at Sutton Valence or in the Cotswolds. There is no reason that I know of why the old sweet wine of Gloucestershire, so famed in the twelfth century, should not now supplement our lack of foreign wines.

Yet although there is much that I regret in the disappearance of past modes of horticulture, there are other fashions which I should not wish to see revived. It can never have been elegant to surround the garden beds with jaw-bones. I am not sure that it was really a good idea to hang bird-cages in the tunnels. I agree with Bacon that the use of coloured sands in flower beds was an artificial and a foolish device. The Tudor garden must have been much defaced by the gimcrack ornaments with which it abounded—fretwork beasts, mirrors, gilt or silver tables or an over-abundance of

statues. There must, as at Versailles, have been less and less love given to the flowers themselves.

We are not always aware of how recently our stock of flowers has been enriched. Many of the flowers which are today regarded as 'old-fashioned' are of comparatively late importation. We know more or less what were the flowers which Shakespeare grew at New Place. The reconstruction of his garden at Stratford is botanically correct. Out in the orchard he had his mulberry tree which that sour vandal, the Rev. Francis Gastrell, cut down in 1758. In his knot garden he grew roses, lavender, santolina, pansies, sweet briar, love-in-idleness, violets, stocks, foxgloves, sweet williams, snapdragons, valerian, peonies, poppies, hollyhock, wallflowers, marigolds ('marybuds'), artemesia, rosemary, daffodils, the flower-de-luce or iris, and 'lilies of all kinds.' Although he speaks more frequently of the rose and lily, I suspect that Shakespeare's favourite flower was the violet, since to it he has devoted one of his loveliest and most observant lines:

'violets dim,
And sweeter than the lids of Jūno's eyes.'

But there are other flowers, familiar to us today, that Shakespeare never saw. The zinnia (which to us seems the most mediaeval of all garden flowers) reached us from Mexico only in 1796. The lovely early irises, the *stylosa* and the *reticulata*, are quite recent introductions. Shakespeare can never have seen a cedar, an acacia, a magnolia, a rhododendron, a dahlia, an azalea, a geranium, an aster or a chrysanthemum. It is possible also that he never saw an English lawn, since in his days the 'green plots' were almost invariably composed of camomile.

Shakespeare was a 'curious' gardener, in that he was interested in new plants. He speaks of the crown imperial, which at that date was rare. He writes also of 'roses damasked white and red,' by which he can only mean the *Rosa Mundi*, which (although some authorities assert that it came here with the crusaders) is not mentioned in Gerard's *Herbal* of 1596. It is probable that Gerard and Shakespeare were close

friends, and that when Shakespeare was living in Mr. Mountjoy's house in Monkwell Street he would often visit the neighbouring garden of the great herbalist in Fetter Lane. In Gerard's garden he would have seen the first crocus, the first sunflower and almost the first potato to be grown in England. He would have seen what Gerard calls the 'blue pipe privet,' which was the earliest lilac to flower in our island. He would have seen the Turkish lily, or martagon, which Gerard collected and propagated. It was there assuredly that he saw his crown imperial and the lady tulip, which was then imported from the downs of Thrace. It was there that he saw the several varieties of the white rose, from which, according to Pliny, Albion may derive her name. It was there, in Fetter Lane, that Gerard cultivated the old cabbage rose, which, although mentioned by Herodotus, had almost become extinct. And it was there, in my fancy, that Shakespeare saw the 'deep vermilion' of the Rosa Gallicia. It was there also that he met, we may well believe, Gerard's great friend Nicholas Leete, who was also a 'curious' gardener, and in fact employed an agent or 'servant' to send him plants from Anatolia and the Near East. This agent had his headquarters at Aleppo, and it is tempting to suggest that Shakespeare first heard that metrical name while walking in the garden of Fetter Lane with Leete and Gerard and in a flash of genius placed it in the tremendous closing scene of *Othello*. How close is the link which these familiar flowers forge between Shakespeare and ourselves! Most of the Elizabethan flowers are still the foundations of our gardens today. One of the few which cannot be identified with any certainty is the 'chevisaunce' which Spenser introduced into the happy jingle:

'The pretty Pawnce
And the Chevisaunce.'

Spenser was an artificial poet and was more interested in words than in botany. But Shakespeare's flowers actually grew in soil. How much he would have loved the flowering shrubs of Golders Green! He would have felt himself transported to the gardens of Cathay.

19. LORD LLOYD AT BURG EL ARAB*

DURING THE Boer War we had a large map of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State mounted upon cardboard and propped upon the blackboard easel in Great School. The headmaster, having read the morning newspapers, would emerge through the baize door which separated his chill study from the turmoil of the school-room and would adjust the little flags which marked our successive encirclements and defeats. Even to my young and inexperienced eye it became obvious that we were surrounded at Ladysmith, surrounded at Mafeking, surrounded at Kimberley, and badly beaten at Lombard's Kop. As winter approached, the cardboard began to curve in the heat of the adjacent fireplace, and the headmaster removed the map to his own study, where it remained for the rest of the war cockled and dusty, leaning against the cupboard where he kept his canes. In the First German War also we had our maps and flags. The latter were removed hurriedly across Belgium and down to Compiègne, leaving pin-holes behind them well within the German lines. But when trench-warfare set in, the names of our local battles were not marked upon the maps which we had bought in August, 1914, nor could we discover upon their already dusty surfaces such places as Gheluvelt or Zillebecke, as Albert or Messines. Once again the great cardboard maps were taken off their easels, the little flags hung limply as their pins rusted, and we settled down to following the war upon the maps provided for us day to day by our enterprising and efficient newspapers. In this war we have long since been rolled off the maps which we bought in 1939, and nothing short of Mercator's Projection, showing the great tilted continents of Europe, Africa and Asia, can cope with its fluidity. So once again we have come to rely upon the sketch-maps which the newspapers provide. The charts of the Western front now lie discarded, their pin-holes pricking-points of forgotten pain.

*July 24, 1942.

During this week I have been scanning with anxious eyes, not merely the great bend of the Don, but also the flat fan which marks the delta of the Nile. War brings fame to the geographically obscure, immortalising villages such as Blenheim or Waterloo, and conferring the glamour of the *Iliad* upon some unknown beach. It is strange to observe how quickly recondite names become intimate, or how places which in one's memory basked placid in the sunshine of eternal peace now stand lit luridly in smoke and fire. The heat-haze which hung about the harbour of Alexandria would, as one approached it slowly from the sea, show a faint ochre band across its centre, and gradually this band would detach itself from the haze of sky above it and the haze of water below, becoming a line of houses which, as one came nearer, turned from ochre into sparkling white. Trees there were, and great moles and breakwaters and villas and school buildings, mounting among green parks. There was a sense of affluence about Alexandria, and the villas of the rich merchants—the '*nitidi mercanti alessandrini*'—were gay with oleanders and green grass. Within their shuttered rooms, which smelt of turpentine, the chandeliers tinkled as one walked across the parquet and the mirrors reflected slits of sunshine through the blinds. When I last saw Alexandria it was at dawn and from the air. The great hydroplane churned the cool waters of the harbour, and one could see, although not hear, the splash it made; up we circled above that ever-luxurious town, villas and gardens swinging together in a circle of green and white, and then northwards across the sea, while Alexandria sank into its haze and the mountains of Crete rose out from the circle of blue in a tangled pattern of amethyst and snow.

As I gazed this morning at the sketch-map with which my newspaper had provided me, letting my eyes wander eastward from Tel El Eisa past El Alamein to the point where the lush delta first fades into the desert, the name of Burg el Arab sprang out at me with a stab of memory. I recalled a visit which I had paid to that strange village in November, 1925.

I remembered the high walls of the place, the Saracenic battlements, the closed balconies which hung suspended above the desert, the huge gateway which opened upon the enclosure. I could see again the Egyptian Camel Corps passing slowly from deep shade to sharp sunlight under the gateway, the camels turning their swinging heads to the breath of the desert as they stepped delicately through the arch, the men sitting hunched upon their saddles, their rifles propped against the pommel. Around us swept the Libyan sand, and by the side of the sea were the scattered stones of past civilisations, the headpieces of Arabian tombs, the stones of Roman temples. Burg El Arab in those days had been constructed as a model village; it contained a market to which the desert folk would come to buy their provisions; there were warehouses and store-rooms and cool white-washed offices for the Egyptian and British officials. Coming out from Alexandria to Burg El Arab one had the impression of having set foot upon the desert which spreads to south and west as a vast ocean of sand; coming from the west, however, the little place must seem the first outpost of the delta, and to bring with it the expectation of water and green fields and the great trees which line the irrigation canals and the sound of frogs croaking in the night.

I was passing through Egypt at the time on my way to Persia, and had been invited by Lord Lloyd, then High Commissioner, to accompany him on a visit of inspection. 'I have to go,' he said, 'to Alexandria on Thursday to see the King, and after that I want to visit a model market-village we are constructing at the very edge of the desert, at a place called Burg El Arab.' There was a political crisis at the time, and Lord Lloyd, who had an acute sense of occasion, wished to give his audience with King Fuad an atmosphere of special solemnity. The cars dashed through the streets of Cairo, preceded and accompanied by police on motor-bicycles. The members of the Egyptian Cabinet were waiting upon the steps of the station and conducted Lord Lloyd along a carpet edged with ferns towards the waiting train. At every

station on the route to Alexandria the local authorities and mayors were gathered upon the platform; the military and the police stood to the salute and the civilians inclined their bodies in respectful welcome as the long white train slid slowly by. On reaching Alexandria the High Commissioner and his staff were driven to the palace with all pomp and security. I remained behind in the train, which chunked leisurely round the outskirts of Alexandria until it reached the western station, where Lord Lloyd, after his audience, was to join it.

He came briskly along the platform, officials hurrying after him, and the train steamed out towards the desert. At luncheon he told me in high glee of what he had said to King Fuad and of what King Fuad had replied. He sent for his secretary and the red boxes were got out and the necessary telegrams were drafted. It was still early in the afternoon when we reached Burg El Arab. We remained there two hours and then the train slid back to Cairo, and there was the carpet again and the ferns, and the lights of boulevards twinkling behind trees. The memory of my visit to Burg El Arab, that happy pause for me on the edge of a great desert, on the edge of a longer journey, is darkened by a sense of loss. Lord Lloyd lived at a time when great energies were inconvenient and as such unpopular; he died at the very moment when the splendour of his energy was recognised and required. He had no admiration either for those abroad who mouthed our democratic formulas for purposes of personal advancement, or for those at home who, in their ignorance, confused empire-building with Imperialism. He had even less admiration for those who ought to have known, but who persuaded themselves and others that self-government and good government were in some way identical terms. To him progress meant something far wider and far firmer than it meant to laxer minds. He knew that our imperial mission was but half begun. And I shall remember him always as on that November day, giving crisp beneficent orders amid the sands and sun of Burg El Arab.

20. DE GAULLE*

MONSIEUR F. DE BRINON, the odious little Ambassador accredited by the Vichy Government to German headquarters in Paris, made a speech the other day in which he assured his startled audience that Pierre Laval 'had always run straight.' He added that although he was unwilling to anticipate the important pronouncement which Monsieur Laval would shortly make, yet he could reveal that the Vichy Government, after long and patient efforts, had now secured 'essential results.' The only thing which might prevent the French people enjoying to the full the benefits conferred upon them by Laval and his German masters was the Communist propaganda of Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt and the attitude of 'incomprehensible hostility' (*invraisemblable hostilité*) adopted by so many Frenchmen to the undeviating incorruptible of the Villa Said. I am unaware, at the time of writing this article, what Laval's tremendous pronouncement is likely to be. Will he proclaim that he has transferred all or some of his powers to Gauleiter Doriot? Will he inform his compatriots that he has agreed to sell as slaves to Germany the 10,000 French Jews now interned at Drancy or Compiègne? Will he announce that he has already handed over the Gestapo the foreign Jews who had taken refuge in France, and who as I write are being shipped like cattle to Dachau or Buchenwald from the camps at Giers, Rivesaltes and Vernet? Or will he announce that he has been persuaded to surrender, either to Franco or Hitler, the Spanish Republicans who after their great struggle took refuge upon French soil? I do not regard the hostility of the French people to such deeds of shame and dishonour as in any sense '*invraisemblable*.' The French have always, as Paul Reynaud reminded Marshal Pétain in his now famous letter, possessed a sense of '*tenue*'; they have always recognised that there are certain actions which a country conscious of its own dignity cannot commit.

*August 14, 1942.

Their hostility to the man who perpetrates such actions is not '*invraisemblable*': it is what one would expect of a great people who, even in the hour of adversity, retain their traditions and their pride. It is fitting that we should remember that Pierre Laval can never, with his slimy meanness, represent the spirit of France; that spirit is represented by forty million people; it is personified in Charles de Gaulle.

It is time that those of us who have hitherto regarded General de Gaulle with admiration but perplexity should clear our minds. Our admiration for his military qualities has always been unstinted. The young lieutenant who was three times wounded in the last war, who fought so valiantly at Douaumont, became during the interlude between the two German wars the prophet of mechanised strategy, a prophet who was without due honour in his own country. His books, and especially his prophetic volume *Vers l'Armée de Métier*, were carefully studied in Germany, but pronounced 'dangerous' by the French General Staff. As commander of the fourth armoured division he won a dashing victory over the Germans on June 2nd, 1940, when he penetrated their columns to a distance of fourteen miles. Appointed Under-Secretary for War at the very moment of disaster, he refused to share either the panic of Tours or the capitulation of Bordeaux. At the time when the people of France were stunned by defeat a resolute voice spoke to them upon the ether. On June 18th, 1940, late at night, those who in shame and in despair turned to the British wireless for hope heard the resonant words: 'It is I, General de Gaulle, who am speaking to you from London.' 'Today,' he said, 'we are overwhelmed by mechanical force: tomorrow we can conquer by superior mechanical force; therein lies the destiny of the world.' We realise today that these words were no rhetorical gestures flung upon the air to comfort a defeated people; they were words of prophecy. We realise today that it was no idle boast on the part of General de Gaulle that he and those who joined him were the saviours of France's honour and the vanguard of France's resurrection. We realise that in the twenty-six months which

have passed since he issued his call to arms he has become not merely the symbol of hope but the organiser of power. Many people know today that General de Gaulle commands an army of trained fighting men; that there are many hundred French airmen under the direction of General Vallin; that the Fighting French Navy contains many valuable vessels of war; and that the Free French Merchant Marine helps the common cause with more than one hundred ships. But how many people are aware that today territories of the French Colonial Empire representing an area fifteen times the size of Great Britain have hoisted the cross of Lorraine? General de Gaulle's attitude in June, 1940, was one of supreme moral courage; he has shown since then that he also possesses great organising capacity.

Yet we were perplexed at first and hesitant; it has taken us two years to understand de Gaulle. Our democratic prejudice against all soldier-politicians led us to wish that General de Gaulle would confine himself to purely military matters and would not aspire to the role of a political leader. We see today that this leadership was thrust upon him, and that had he remained no more than the officer commanding the French volunteers his representative function would have been diminished. We regretted that he should be so difficult, so unaccommodating, so authoritative; we see today that unless he had asserted himself in season and out of season he would have become no more than a foreign officer in the pay of the British Treasury. We distrusted those by whom he was at first surrounded, and disliked the methods which on occasions they pursued. We realise now that he was bound to improvise his National Committee, and that today it is composed of men whom all can respect. We were hurt by the emphasis which he placed upon his own independence, attributing his criticism of our methods to some dislike of English ways; we see now that his determination to remain essentially and combatively French was a wise determination, and that when he returns he will not return in the baggage of the Allies. Had de Gaulle sought always to be convenient he would have

ended by being ignored; the force of his personality, highly inconvenient though it has proved at moments, renders it impossible that either he or France can ever be disregarded. The fears that we once entertained lest he might on his return establish some military dictatorship have been dissipated by his own utterances and by the wider composition which he is now seeking to give to his National Committee. We see today that the apparent arrogance of his person embodies and defends the wounded pride of France; and in his faithful ruminative eyes is reflected the eternal patience of her wisdom.

In the *Marseillaise* recently, Monsieur André Philip, who has just joined General de Gaulle's National Committee as Commissary for Internal Affairs and Labour, gave some account of the present condition of French public opinion. Monsieur Philip, who is a Left Wing politician of the Christian Socialist type, has done courageous work in France and can speak with intimate knowledge of the functioning of the *gaulliste* movement in both the occupied and the unoccupied zone. He states in this article that the stage of propaganda is ending and that stage of action has arrived. The overwhelming mass of the population in both zones are outspoken or tacit adherents of de Gaulle and the convinced enemies of Vichy and of collaboration with the Germans. France has now recovered from the torpor of 1941 and no longer regards the victory of the Allies as problematical. Let us hope that this new spirit of resistance will be neither imprudently nor prematurely released. That it should exist is a cause of hope and congratulation. The wireless, with the assistance of such underground papers as *Père Duchesne*, *Le Coq Enchaîné* and *Combat*, will keep the embers smouldering. And no fifth column that has ever existed will be so potent and so disturbing as that which today works for us in France. I do not believe that this great result could have been achieved but for the dynamic, the symbolic, personality of the man who, on that sad night of June 18th, 1940, said, 'It is I, General de Gaulle, who am speaking to you from London.'

21. TRANSLATIONS OF ENGLISH*

I WAS lecturing on Monday night to the Yugoslav Club in London. When they asked me some months ago to accept this engagement, I had foreseen that it would be best to avoid all subjects connected either with the present war or the future peace. I promised, therefore, that I should talk to them upon 'The Approach to English Literature.' How optimistic one is in spring-time regarding these distant autumnal engagements, and how constantly one forgets that but a few hurried hours will pass before the peach-blossom rounds itself into wasp-infested fruits and the spider-webs glisten against the yews! The determined date rushes upon one suddenly as a railway-station upon a family unaware of the imminence of their destination; the outlying bungalows of Bognor Regis swing past the carriage windows, and in panic dismay the milk-bottle, the meccano set, the knitting and the P.G. Wodehouse are tumbled into the basket together; one stands upon the platform breathless and disarrayed. That May afternoon when I accepted my engagement to the Yugoslavs, and fixed my tactful subject, it had all seemed so remote and easy. But when I realised that the last day of August was actually upon me, I also realised that the subject I had chosen was intricate in the extreme—and that most of my audience knew little English. Even before an English university audience it would be difficult to treat such a subject adequately with the space of fifty minutes. But to convey the substance of English lyricism to an audience who knew but little English, and whose whole tradition was an epic tradition, seemed to me, when the date was on me, as impossible as describing to a Baluchi warrior the colours of the Weald of Kent.

Such experiences are, however, valuable, in that they oblige us to consider English literature from a totally new angle. How, within so short a space of time, could I convey

*September 4, 1942.

to a foreign audience, consisting to a large degree of soldiers and civil servants, an even approximate impression of anything so multiform and so vast? The literature of any country is composed not of content or form alone, but of other important elements, and notably those of association and suggestion. These other elements are almost totally lost in translation, nor do they evoke the correct emotional or aesthetic response in people trained in other habits of mind and language. And if this be true of all literature, it is doubly true of English literature, in which the associative and the suggestive play so important a part. The greatest passages of English literature, as for instance those passages of 'pure' poetry which provide the English reader with delighted moments of satisfaction and surprise, owe their effect not to content or even to form, but to highly inventive association. They do make sense, but they make something far more important than sense, and to a foreigner they make nothing at all; since it is upon the stout warp of common national tradition that the genius of a creative artist embroiders in silk and gold.

Some enlightenment can, I suppose, be given by adopting the metaphorical method. One can say, for instance, that French literature is best approached as a magnificent piece of architecture; that German literature should be regarded as a forest; that English literature is a garden, and so on. One can say things of this sort, but I do not know that they are very true, and I doubt very much whether they convey any valuable meaning to a Yugoslav Colonel. I think I was right, therefore, in taking the severely practical line and in confining my talk within the following quite reasonable formulas: 'You are here in England. You are likely to remain here some time. You will not, I hope, remain here long enough to be able to master the whole of English literature. But you will remain here long enough to know something about a few English books. If you begin by trying to read Shakespeare or Shelley you will at the outset become discouraged and confused. Your approach to English literature should, therefore,

be a tentative approach from the facile to the complicated. I suggest to you the following ten books as stages in your progression.'

It would be an interesting competition, on the 'desert-island' analogy, to work out a list of ten English books which one would recommend as an approach to English literature to an audience of Yugoslav exiles. My own list was as follows: *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Trollope's *Dr. Thorne*, *Vanity Fair*, *Bleak House*, Macaulay's *Essays*, Strachey's *Queen Victoria*, Winston Churchill's *My Early Life*, Trevelyan's *History of England*, Grey's *Twenty-five Years*, *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. I do not expect that any of my readers will agree with this list; but I think they will agree that if a Yugoslav Colonel were to start by reading Conan Doyle he would find it easier to read Trollope, and that if he had mastered *Vanity Fair*, *Bleak House* would offer less difficulty; and I think they would also agree that this list would, in form and content, give the Colonel some conception of how differently we feel at Luton or Ipswich from the way they feel at Karlovatz and Gostivar. Nor do I doubt that if the Colonel really read these books he would understand a little better why we enjoy *The Prelude* and why, for more than a century, we held the seven seas. I believed that this method of approach would be acceptable and useful, but I was disconcerted on leaving to be asked what translations of the English classics into French or German I would recommend. I answered 'None of them.' Was that a hasty or a priggish rejoinder? For had it not been for translations I should never have read Ibsen or *War and Peace*.

I contend, however, that of all modern literature, English loses most by translation. It is true that there are many translations of English, especially into German, which do preserve the content, and even the form of the original. Nobody, for instance, could have heard Shakespeare performed on the German stage in the translation of Tieck and Schlegel without being amazed by the fidelity with which the thought, the feeling and even the language of the original has been trans-

posed. One of the most satisfactory translations which I know of in any language is Stefan George's rendering of *The Sonnets*. Yet even in two languages as akin to each other as are the English and German languages, most of the artifices and many of the finer shades defy all transposition. I possess a German translation of *In Memoriam*, published by Jakob Feiss in 1899. It is a scholarly and ingenious piece of work, nor have I anything but admiration for Dr. Feiss's sincerity and care. Yet Tennyson's skill in the handling of vowels and consonants, which constitutes so important an element in his poetry, is lost in translation. I have glanced, for instance, at Dr. Feiss's rendering of section XIX of *In Memoriam*, and find that the astonishing interchange of alliteration between the consonants 's' and 'h' completely disappears in the German version; nor could anyone reading the line *Alsdann verstummt sein leises Murmeln* have any conception that it is intended to reflect the beauty of 'And hushes half the babbling Wye.'

In French, the transposition of the two languages is even more disastrous. Before the French language became 'a piano without pedals' it was sometimes possible to suggest French poetry in English, as is proved by George Wyndham's charming renderings of the *Pléiade*. But after Malherbe communication between the two languages became sadly interrupted. I have among my books an anthology of English poetry published in a French translation in 1940. I find that some of our simplest lines and lyrics are completely untranslatable. For instance, 'This happy breed of men, this little world,' is not really the same as '*Cette race privilégiée, ce monde en raccourci*'; when I read '*O tigre, tigre, effrayant d'ardeur*,' I do not experience at all the same emotion as when I read 'Tiger, tiger burning bright!'; nor is 'Thou still unravished bride of quietness' satisfactorily rendered by '*O toi, la fiancée secrète du silence*.' No, on the whole, I think I was right in discouraging the Yugoslavs from reading English in translations.

22. CHURCHILL AS AN ORATOR*

THE BRAINS TRUST the other day were asked what were the principles of oratory and who was the greatest living orator? Had they defined oratory merely as the capacity to arouse effective emotions among the masses, then assuredly they would have accorded the palm to Hitler. But since they included truthfulness among the main virtues of the orator, they decided that, on the whole, Winston Churchill was the best speaker of his age. In the course of the discussion, Professor Gilbert Murray mentioned Cicero's *De Oratore*, and I have since re-read that dialogue in order to remind myself of what Cicero had actually said. The scene of the disputation is laid in the villa-garden of Lucius Crassus at Tusculum, and the members of this Roman Brains Trust (which included Julius Caesar in the unexpected guise of the witty man) lie upon cushions in the shade of an enormous plane tree. The assembled politicians did not, except incidentally, mention sincerity as among the faculties essential to the successful orator. They narrowed down their argument to five main essentials, namely: (1) Natural gifts, (2) experience, (3) understanding of human nature, (4) self-confidence, and (5) style. Under natural gifts, they attached special importance to the gift of memory, and indeed it would have been impossible for any Roman senator to speak from typewritten notes. By 'experience' they meant not merely long practice in public speaking, not merely 'the trained skill of highly educated men,' but also a deep knowledge of foreign and domestic affairs. Understanding of human nature seemed to them essential, since a good speaker must be a man of the world ('*perurbanus*'), must possess sufficient psychological insight to capture the favour of his audience, and must have a special sympathy with national character. All those who feel shy of public speaking will be interested by their remarks upon self-confidence. It was, they felt, not sufficient merely to master

*October 2, 1942.

one's nervousness (and they admitted that their knees knocked together when they rose in the senate), it was also essential to possess 'os,' meaning thereby 'bounce' or 'cheek.' And among the obvious components of style they classed diction, gesture, intonation, method, lucidity, charm, variety and tact.

Last week, Messrs. Cassel published a second volume of Mr. Winston Churchill's War Speeches under the title of *The Unrelenting Struggle*. I have amused myself by examining his oratory in the light of Cicero's five points. Under the heading of 'natural gifts' the Prime Minister would not obtain full marks. He is not a born orator; he has a poor rhetorical memory and is forced to rely much on notes; his eminence as a speaker is due rather to his immense capacity for taking pains. From the test of 'experience' he emerges triumphantly, since there are few men alive today who possess his immense knowledge of public affairs or who are so deeply imbued with veneration for 'the splendours of our political and moral inheritance.' Under the test of understanding of human nature and of the national character he would obtain quite good marks. His self-confidence is often hampered by modesty and by extreme sensitiveness; but nobody could regard him as deficient in 'os.' His diction, which to him is an asset of charm, might prove a liability to any less loved man. He is capable of great lucidity, and his powers of exposition and narrative are of a high order. His gestures, although few, are ungainly; his charm is all his own. Undoubtedly he possesses variety, wit and humour. He does not always possess tact, and there are times when his passionate sincerity gets the better of his sense of occasion. I should conclude, therefore, that if Winston Churchill were to be examined as an orator under the five Ciceronian tests, he would receive some sixty marks out of a hundred. None the less, I certainly regard him as the greatest orator now alive. How am I to account for the missing forty marks?

The Ciceronian formula, in that it omits sincerity, is not enough. Winston Churchill possesses powers of personality,

some of which would have been regarded by Cicero as lacking in gravity, others of which transcend the limits of Cicero's rather mean philosophy of life. The fact is that Churchill puts into his speeches the very things which Cicero left out. In estimating oratory of such immense temporary significance, one should seek to assess it regardless of its immediate historical import and unmoved by the surge of gratitude associated with 'the breathless days of June.' Viewed objectively, I should suppose that what gives to Churchill's speeches so high a place in the history of rhetoric is a peculiar combination of humanity and elevation. Under 'humanity' I should include not only his rare gift of sentiment and pity, but the special attributes of his charm and style. The charm, the incommunicable charm, of Churchill's oratory is composed of elements more subtle and more varied than those of which the Romans dreamed. He is modest; he is unpretentious; he is not in the least conceited; he is at once proud and humble, 'I am only the servant,' he said in June, 1941, 'of the Crown and Parliament; I am always at the disposal of the House of Commons, in which I have lived my life.' Formidable but kind, truculent but generous, pugnacious but amused, he gives to his themes and his allusions a variety which serves to illumine the concentration and intensity of his will. The flashes of his humour, the zest with which he savours them himself, play like summer lightning among the towering cloud-masses of his sternness. He creates surprise not so much by sudden outbursts of the unusual or dramatic, as by the unexpected usage of expected terms. He maintains expectancy by the very zest of his delivery, by the impression he conveys of being passionately interested himself. He achieves an accord of feeling, partly by his pervading courtesy and humanity, and more specifically by his use of the Anglo-Saxon, and his abuse of the foreign, word. And he conveys in his every ungainly gesture, in the stamping of his feet, in the jerk and jump of his impatient knees, a sense of energy and gusto, of which Cicero, with his studied Roscian mode, would have deeply disapproved.

Such tricks of manner or delivery delight the emotions; yet after all it is by the elevation of his will and character that Churchill's oratory moves the minds of man. There is the note of defiance which echoes in 'Let it roar and let it rage. We shall come through.' There is the call to courage in 'We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle nor the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down.' There is the manliness of 'To defeat there is only one answer. The only answer to defeat is victory.' There is the strong pulse of pride which pounds along through all our defeats and rejoices that we are still the masters of our destiny. And behind it all there is a simple sense of moral principles:

'History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with pale gleams the passions of former days. What is the worth of all this? The only guide to a man is his conscience; the only shield to his memory is the rectitude and sincerity of his actions. It is very imprudent to walk through life without this shield, because we are so often mocked by the failure of our hopes and the upsetting of our calculations; but with this shield, however the fates may play, we march always in the ranks of honour.'

I have heard many of the greatest orators of my age. I have listened to the screams of Hitler and the deep reverberations of Briand's lovely voice. I have admired the art of Painlevé, the lucidity of Stafford Cripps, the purity of Asquith's mind, the 'os' of Aneurin Bevan, the brilliance of Venizelos, the austerity of Woodrow Wilson. From these I have derived many emotional or intellectual effects. But only for a moment have they made me feel different; after listening to Churchill I feel different, and far better, for quite a time. Assuredly under the aegis of such simplicity and grandeur, inspired by such 'sublime resolve,' we shall be able, as we have been enabled, 'to save and guide the world.'

23. HITLER AND THE CHANGE OF THE TIDE*

IN THE rush and glitter of these miraculous weeks, at a moment when victory is being affirmed over a hundred yards of snow-flecked pavement and a thousand miles of sun-scorched sand, we are tempted to overlook the symptoms of confusion which reach us from the inner fortress of our enemies. For the first time since that grim morning of September 3rd, 1939, it is positively agreeable to listen to the enemy wireless, and to detect the undertone of perplexity which, under all their exhortation, rustles like the autumn wind among the pines. The voice of Italy is shrill with a note of hysteria; in the voice of Germany there is a note of angered resolve. The Italians (horrified as they have been by the lethal rush of the Genoese towards their shelters, terrified as they are by the impending menace to the Sicilian Channel), are seeking to arouse among their unwarlike populace the spirit which we ourselves acquired in 1940. The Germans, who in the desire to divert public attention from the discomfiture of the Russian campaign, had concentrated immediate hope upon the capture of Egypt, are seeking to inspire comfort by stories of the bloodless occupation of Marseilles, by dwelling upon Rommel's amazing powers of extrication.

To both peoples the prospect of victory had, by imprudent propaganda, been allowed to assume the form of an immediate pincer-movement from the Caucasus and the Suez Canal, which would result in the expulsion of Great Britain from the Mediterranean, and gigantic future campaigns in the Middle and Far East, culminating in the junction of the Germans and the Japanese. Nor is this the only fantasy which has been shattered; day by day and week by week the German and Italian people have been taught that sea-power has been broken by the submarine and the aeroplane; it is with horror that they now observe that great armadas can be

*November 20, 1942.

ferried across the oceans, it is with dismay that they ask themselves at what point upon their exposed sea-board the next thunderbolt is likely to fall. There is no cause on our part for premature jubilation; as Lord Haig was wont to remark, 'News is seldom either as good or as bad as it seems at first'; it will not be easy in the least to capture Bizerta; and the menaces of the submarine and the *Luftwaffe* are bound to prove increasingly serious. Yet although we have every ground for caution, they have little ground for delight.

Perhaps the most significant symptom of this decline in certitude which, like some nervous affliction, is twitching at the fibres of German will, is the changed note of Herr Hitler's own pronouncements. In his recent *Bierhalle* speech (a speech delivered before the defeat of Rommel) one missed the drums and cymbals of the old triumphal march; for the first time the word 'capitulation' formed itself upon his derisive lips. Seldom has the Führer shrieked so lustily; seldom has his message been so little '*Sieg Heil!*' In the admirable broadcasts transmitted to Germany from London the most regular speaker today is Adolf Hitler; records of all his past speeches, of all his arrogant assertions and promises, have been carefully taken, indexed and filed; hour by hour these speeches are now being broadcast again to the German people. The voice of Hitler is seldom off the air; and as they listen again (for they do listen) to that voice screaming at them out of the past, the Germans may well ask themselves whether the '*nachtwändlerische Sicherheit*' of their leader has proved so certain after all. Even more curious are the two messages which Herr Hitler addressed to the Vichy Government and the French people at the moment when he occupied the unoccupied zone. Inevitably, in the rush of events, these two pronouncements have not received in this country the attention which they deserve. Yet they merit careful analysis. It is easy enough to dismiss them as examples of forensic hypocrisy. They contain, it is true, many passages of slimy solicitation such as we are accustomed to find in Hitler's demagogic discourse. But they also contain certain observations of what

he would call a 'geopolitical' order, and which are illustrative of his ignorant, but most imaginative, political dreams.

The first of these documents is the letter which, on the eve of violating the Armistice, he addressed to Marshal Pétain. In this letter he recalls how the declaration of war in September, 1939, 'affected him deeply' (*m'affligea profondément*); how the armistice which he imposed upon a conquered France was moderate in the extreme, and was, in fact, not a dictated peace but a 'truce'; how it was his sincere desire that the 'beautiful land of France' should not again become a theatre of hostilities; and how, realising that 'the reappearance of England and America upon the Continent of Europe might lead to the destruction of all European nations, and the annihilation of culture,' he had decided to 'defend the frontiers of culture and European civilisation.' In his message to the French people of November 11th, Herr Hitler adopted similar arguments, 'In the Armistice,' he said, 'Germany asked for nothing incompatible with the honour of the French army.' It is the fact, of course, that the comparative moderation of the Armistice terms was due to Hitler's conviction that Great Britain, within a few weeks, would also collapse. It is true that, had he foreseen the stubbornness of our resistance, and the slow efficiency with which we could prepare ourselves for a counter-offensive, he would himself have occupied Marseilles and Toulon immediately, and have allowed Mussolini to take Corsica and Tunis. Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss as mere hypocrisy the whole theory disclosed in these two messages; to do that would be to ignore some of the most important illusions which nest in Hitler's fantastic mind.

There have recently appeared in *Die Zeitung* (that admirable German weekly now being published in London) two interesting articles by Peter Bratt upon the difference between 'culture' and 'Kultur.' Had we, as a people, fully understood this difference in the past, it might well have been that our relations with Germany would have been conducted with greater intelligence and more alert caution. For, whereas 'culture' in the Western European sense is largely static

and subjective, 'Kultur,' as understood by the Germans, is essentially objective and dynamic. For us 'culture' has no political or even national implications, and is generally regarded as a rather luxurious habit of mind acquired by an intellectual minority. For the Germans, 'Kultur' is the organised expression of national, or even nationalistic energy. We get nearer to the distinction if we consider the difference in the meaning of the word 'civilisation' as interpreted, on the one hand by Mr. Clive Bell, and on the other by a conscientious official in the Sudan Civil Service. When Hitler speaks of 'European culture' he is thinking perfectly sincerely of a Europe controlled, planned, managed and educated upon a system of German 'Kultur.' It is reasonable to suppose that he did, in fact, delude himself with the theory that some marriage might be consummated between Germanic 'Kultur' and the lovely culture of France; and that he did, in fact, suppose, upon the analogy of '*Graecia capta . . .*' that some fusion could be achieved between French grace and Teutonic efficiency such as would enable him, as master of Europe, to live happy days as '*Gott in Frankreich.*'

In this, as in so much else, Herr Hitler is typical of the average German; the rigidity with which the Germans cling to their premises is as strange as the elasticity with which we abandon ours. The muddle which Germany has made of her new order is not only due to transport difficulties, or to the heroism of the men and women in the occupied territories; it is also due to a false assumption on the part of the Germans that the benefits of 'Kultur' are so self-evident that it can only be the guile of Britain which prevents Europe from accepting the new order with delighted acclaim. In dealing with older civilisations the fingers of the Germans become thumbs; it may well be that in their angered disappointment we shall now see the mailed fist emerging completely undisguised. Europe, before liberation comes, may well pass through an even more atrocious phase; and Hell knows no fury such as Hitler scorned. That in itself must cast a cloud upon our jubilation.

24. JACQUES-EMILE BLANCHE*

WITH THE death of Jacques-Emile Blanche and the defection of André Maurois we have lost the two men who were best able to interpret England to France. It may well be that Maurois, following the example of Pucheu, Peyrouton and Darlan, may now seek to explain away the things he said about us at the time of our misfortunes, and may contend that his criticisms were due to nothing more than the anxious solicitude of a devoted friend. I am prepared to believe that when in those dark months of 1940 he reached America (having escaped from both France and England) his main desire was to defend the reputation of his own country and army, even at the cost of other loyalties; I admit that the things he then said and wrote do not appear, on subsequent examination, to have been as unfaithful as they seemed at first; yet I regret that a man whose literary and academic repute was so largely based upon his appreciation of the British character should not have affirmed more stoutly his faith in us at the most glorious moment of our history. People like Eve Curie and Henri Bernstein were under no intellectual or spiritual obligations to Great Britain, yet they espoused our cause with ardent faith; compared to the Vichy-hôpital of André Maurois their enthusiasm was as champagne. I am sorry about André Maurois, since he was a man of ability and charm. But I am even more saddened by the recent death of Jacques-Emile Blanche. His understanding of us was wider, deeper and of far longer duration than that of Maurois; he had known Victorian London, and possessed (as Maurois did not) a knowledge of our country life; he had observed the transition from nineteenth-century to twentieth-century England, and had been intimate with such diverse figures as Wilde, Beardsley, Henry James, George Moore and Sickert; and since he was equally intimate with three generations of French artists and writers, he formed a valuable hyphen

*November 27, 1942.

between the two cultures. I am sorry indeed that he has died.

In all material respects the life of Jacques-Emile Blanche was comfortable beyond compare. His father was the greatest nerve specialist of his day, and it was in his clinic at Passy, in what is now known as the Rue du Docteur Blanche, that the disordered geniuses of the age, such as Maupassant, sought refuge and refreshment. As a child Jacques-Emile was surrounded by French nurses, English governesses, mufflers and mittens. He could recall how driving one morning in the *Bois* with the family coachman and Miss Ellen, he was made to stand up in the carriage and salute the little Prince Imperial who jingled by. From an early age he manifested a marked aptitude for painting and a precocious admiration for the work of Manet. As a young man he displayed (and, in fact, retained throughout his long life) astonishing artistic promise. Some of his portraits (as the portrait of Aubrey Beardsley and the portrait of Harry Melville), are, in fact, most intelligent; the sketches of London and of Dieppe which he painted under the influence of Sickert are agreeable and gifted. In later life he embarked upon literature, published six volumes of the *Cahiers d'un Artiste*, wrote several novels (of which *Aymeris* is the most notable), composed a really brilliant guide-book to Dieppe, and recorded his recollections of the artistic and literary giants of his age in such admirable books as *De David à Degas* and *Mes Modèles*. His external life through all these years of pleasurable activity remained beautifully cushioned. He inherited his father's large house at Passy, with a garden attached. He acquired the little manor of Offranville, a few kilometres from Dieppe, where he would spend the summer months. As a child he had been protected against the rude shocks of material life by a defensive screen of governesses and nurses; as a man he was blessed by the care of a devoted wife, and the sympathy of his intelligent sister-in-law, Catherine Lemoine. These admirable women convoyed him, like two grey torpedo-destroyers, through the perils of a hostile world. Blanche was always fortunate in his immediate surroundings.

He was not a happy man. The nervous instability which as a child had caused such anxiety to his parents developed in later life into an acute sensitiveness to criticism, and a morbidly pessimistic conception of the future of the world, of Europe, of France, and of Jacques-Emile Blanche. He was aware that neither in art nor literature had he fulfilled the promise of his earlier years, and it became for him a continual distress that those who most deeply admired either his painting or his books were not those whom he himself most deeply admired. He had no special craving for immortality, but it was constantly irksome for him to feel that in spite of his remarkable gifts, both as an artist and a writer, he was debarred from creating masterpieces either in painting or in literature. He possessed an enormous number of highly interesting acquaintances; he had many French and English friends (Miss Trevelyan, Miss Sands, the Saxton Nobles, Miss Hudson); and he was always at great pains to enter into touch with the younger generation. Yet he lacked zest; and his capacity for enjoyment was constantly marred by apprehension of the penalties which were bound to follow. Had he suffered a little more he might have become a great artist; had he suffered a little less he could have drunk to the full the nectar of the *douceur de vivre*. One always had a sense of disappointment that Blanche could not manage to be a happier man.

In the summer of 1919 I went to Offranville on the occasion of the unveiling of the war memorial which he had painted for the village church. The sunshine glowed upon the pink brick of his manor house, and the air was heavy with the scent of phlox. It was cool inside the house, and the rooms smelt of beeswax and lilies and quince. The sun poured in through the windows, lighting the parquet flooring, lighting the gay chintz, catching some corner of a Sickert or a Conder on the walls. The women of the house were busy around the dining room preparing the port wine and the biscuits which were to serve as a collation after the ceremony. Blanche in his tidy London clothes was fussy and apprehensive. He passed nervously between the dining room and the drawing

room, now calling my attention to a Beardsley drawing, now making suggestions about the *vin d'honneur*. We walked in the thick dust of the village highway towards the church. There were gathered the mayor, the *curé* and the local deputy, who, being anti-clerical in his opinions, smoked cigarettes among the gravestones with a smile of condescending derision in his lips. And when it was all over, and the sun began to sink into the hidden sea, we were able to congratulate each other upon a successful ceremony, upon how tactfully the *curé* had behaved to all concerned, upon the beauty of the memorial painting, and upon the peace which, but a few days before, had been signed with all the apparatus of triumph at Versailles. Blanche, as always, was disconsolate. It might be true that we had defeated the Germans, and had imposed our will upon a vanquished Europe. Yet Russia remained. The spectre of Germany had been exorcised only to be succeeded by the even more horrid spectre of Communism. 'We are lost,' murmured Jacques-Emile Blanche. 'It is the end of everything.' His pale and anxious face glimmered in the lovely dusk.

It is curious that a man so receptive of disaster should three times in his life have had to endure invasion. As a child he had heard them shouting for the Republic in the streets of Dieppe, and had been hurried across to England before the Prussians arrived. In the last war he had walked the terrace at Offranville listening to the distant rumble of the Battle of the Somme. And what happened in this war? It seems that he died at Offranville a few days only after our attack upon Dieppe. For nine dread hours the peace of Offranville must have been shattered by the rattle of machine-guns, the whirl of aeroplanes, the thunder of guns. But today the windows of the drawing room have ceased their rattle, and the winter sun streams in, lighting now upon a strip of *aubusson* and now a bunch of chrysanthemums in a Wedgwood vase. I regret that Blanche should not have lived to see the dawn of victory. Even to his disconsolate features it would have brought a gleam of hope.

• 25. FIRE-WATCHING*

IT is generally assumed that in war-time there must exist a certain tension between the soldier and the civilian, between the combatant and the non-combatant. It would seem natural to suppose that those who after long encounters with death and suffering are accorded a few days at home should look upon our comforts, or our small discomforts, with enmity or contempt. It would seem inevitable that the boy who returns from some trans-Atlantic flight, or from the cold darkness of a Murmansk convoy, should view with displeasure his soft-skinned uncle mumbling about the black-out from a warmed armchair. Certain it is that we, the elderly, are acutely sensitive to this difference, and feel embarrassment and shame when we catch in young, once restless, eyes the taut look of experience. Yet in fact, the warrior on leave is so anxious to remember peace that he is almost grateful to those who ignore war. The crusader must have been pleased rather than irritated on his return from those years of salt-marshes and scurvy to find his women folk still weaving the tapestry which they had begun the day he sailed. It was not with resentment or envy that on the eve of Agincourt King Henry referred to the civilians; it was in terms of regretful sympathy. Nor can I recall that in the last war any displeasure was expressed by those who returned from Flanders to the music-hall gaiety with which the lights of London were then lit. The civilian should remember that the young warrior who has fought in Crete or at Alamein is not in the very least impressed by the tiny inconveniences which his parents may endure; the wise parent should avoid all semblance of a common sacrifice, knowing it to be grotesquely disproportionate, and should seek only to create for those few days the sweet illusion that home at least is much the same.

This truth, I fear, is not always appreciated by my fellow-

*December 18, 1942.

civilians. The young warrior is not in the least incensed when his grandfather bursts into invective because the club can no longer provide him with bottles of Haut Brion claret; but he becomes bored and resentful when the same grandfather claims some share in military prowess, and tells boastful stories how, last Sunday, he was up till 2 a.m. with his company of the Home Guard. The elderly should remember that all they can give to the young is a sense of continuity; they cannot convey any sense of common effort or experience; let them hide their war-work and bring out the cakes and ale. I question even whether it be wise for the elderly to caricature their own absurd efforts, and to recount gay and vivid anecdotes of their own incompetence. The boy who has crept through the mine-fields of Libya is not amused in the least to hear that his father also, in Surrey, became entangled in a quick-set hedge. The boy on leave does not want, in any way, to be reminded of the unusual; he wants to be assured that the familiar continues; and the unselfish parent will not seek to divert him with tales of comic conduct in war-time, but to suggest to him that there will be more daffodils, this spring, under the apple-tree, or they they must plant together more willow-cuttings by the pond.

I do not wish to seem a traitor to my own age-group, or to deride the efforts which we make. I wish only to persuade my coevals to keep their public spirit and their clumsiness hidden from those who fight. Among ourselves, however, we can discuss with interest and profit the amazing incompetence in all manual matters of those who have devoted their lives to intellectual pursuits. My own ineptitude at war-work has been so exceptional, so immensely original, that it has left me with a sense, not so much of humiliation, as of blank astonishment. There was a time when I tried (and I really did try) to make munitions in my spare moments. I went to a training-centre. I have met with much kindness in my life, but never have I seen human love and pity so beautifully expressed as in the patience lavished upon me by my instructors. There were two of them, and they each discovered that in me

they had found a whole-time job. While one of them would repair the tool that I had damaged, the other, with sweet forgiveness, would readjust the belt that I had displaced. The objects, which with great care and much exhaustion I would manufacture, were at the end of the evening's class placed by themselves in cardboard box, marked 'N.G.', signifying (I have little doubt) 'No good.' I would leave the shop with my muscles twisting in pain, with my feet throbbing with flat-footedness, with my arms thick in oil, and in my hair large pools or splashes of that viscous liquid with which machine-tools are cooled. Fifty years of study and action had been taken from me; I was back at school soiled and humiliated by physical incompetence. Grimly I reflected that I had missed my true vocation in life; my true vocation was that of *saboteur*.

It may be, it must be, that to manufacture munitions is a task requiring quite exceptional skill and power. Yet nobody could pretend that to engage in fire-watching can entail, except at moments of actual crisis, any exceptional ability. Yet I have the impression that, even when there is no fire to watch, I do it badly. It is my proud function to watch the Palace of Westminster. In an illustrated paper some weeks ago I was glad to see several pages of photographs devoted to the prowess and self-sacrifice of those of us who, at night time, guard the mother of Parliaments. My colleagues in those photographs were represented in tin helmets creeping through Mr. Pugin's machicolations, striding boldly across vast roofs, resting after these self-sacrificing labours in little military beds. It all seemed so competent, so adventurous, so alert, so communal, so young. It is true that when the sirens sing I patrol my area with lamp and whistle. Along the corridors I stalk, through the great galleries, up the heraldic staircases. I know exactly what I must do when a bomb or an incendiary descends. I must blow my whistle very hard indeed, and then take cover. I know even how to use a stirrup-pump, and how, while doing so, neatly to avert my face and head. I pace the premises repeating these detailed,

but on the whole simple, instructions to myself, longing (for I confess that my boredom on such occasions is more than I can bear) for the show to begin. But the siren seldom these days sings for long.

The process of fire-watching is lonely, uncomfortable, tiresome, but not exacting. It is not an activity of which any skilful uncle would boast to a nephew recently returned from Murmansk. Yet a curious mood of depression is aroused by fire-watching in the Palace of Westminster. Those Gothic vaults, those wide tessellated pavements are associated in our minds with garish lights, with the full pulse and throb of history, with the shuffling feet of a thousand supplicants. When empty, the Palace is sad as a deserted railway-station. For an hour or two a few belated Members remain in the building. One dreads to see them leave. There in the Library, under the light of a lonely green lamp, some legislator will be writing letters to his constituents. He rises, switches off his lamp, and makes away, holding the envelopes of assiduity in his hand. One longs to detain him:—*verweile doch, du bist so schön*. For when full night descends, the Houses of Parliament echo to one's lonely footstep like a series of abandoned cathedrals. The beam of one's torch flashes, now upon the Wool-sack and now upon the Speaker's chair—only the tape-machine humming and ticking in the corridor recalls the fact that life goes on. Sadly one repairs to the little truckle bed in the dormitory, sadly one unfolds the army blanket, and lays one's helmet, torch and whistle on the floor beside one. The chiming of Big Ben entangles itself with the chimes of the Abbey as the hours drag by. One listens with affectionate regard to the slumbers of one's fellow-watchers. But when dawn creeps up the river one rises gladly, folds one's blankets with dexterous relief, delivers up the accoutrements, and walks out under the arches to where the air is clean and cold and sweet.

26. THE PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS*

BEFORE ADJOURNING for the Christmas holiday the House of Commons made a most unusual demonstration. In reply to a question by Mr. Silverman, the Foreign Secretary had read in solemn tones the declaration agreed to by the United Nations condemning the extermination of the Jews in Europe. Most Members had already read the official report circulated by the Polish Government, and many of them, a few days before, had been present in a Committee Room when further details had been given from authoritative sources. The House was already aware that this was no mere formal pronouncement, no artificial gesture of propaganda, but a joint movement of indignant protest, fortified by unquestioned evidence and motivated by the elementary principles of humanity. The occasion would in any case have been impressive, but what moved the House to a higher level of indignant sympathy were a few words spoken by Mr. James de Rothschild, the Member for the Isle of Ely. One of the most sinister of all the horrors of war is that it numbs sensibility and satiates conscience: immediate suffering is so apparent that imagination winces away from sufferings which are more remote; distant atrocities are apt to arouse little more than a detached regret. Mr. de Rothschild has for many years been a popular and highly respected champion of the Liberal Party; in his comments and criticisms he displays generally the slightly aloof balance of a man of the world; he represents the intellectual element. The few improvised words which he uttered that morning were doubly effective. The passionate emotion which he displayed startled the House into alert attention, and his reminder that 'but for the grace of God' many of our own Jewish citizens might be suffering equal torture drove home the point that these great miseries were being inflicted upon people similar to those whom, in our own daily lives, we know ourselves.

*December 25, 1942.

The demonstration which followed was spontaneous and fitting. The whole House stood silently for a moment as if at prayer. Such a scene has not been witnessed within the memory of man, nor is it possible to dismiss it as a mere gesture of defiance designed to excuse or to conceal our practical impotence. It was more than that. It was a startling and unrehearsed affirmation of principle; it was a pledge of intention. To our Jewish comrades it brought solace and encouragement; to their persecutors, however much they may deride it, it will cause a certain uneasiness. It will oblige our Government to act with generosity towards such refugees as we may still be able to rescue and receive; it will go far to dispel the froth of anti-semitism which always gathers on disturbed or poisoned waters; and above all it reminds us of the true proportions of those principles for which we fight. For if 'democracy' be a word so thumbled in the market-place that it has lost its image and superscription; if 'liberty' be a term so ill-defined as to have but a blurred appeal; there can be no doubt, no doubt at all, that 'cruelty' is the greatest of all our enemies, and that in fighting cruelty we are, without thought of the past and without fear of the future, united in an ardent cause. It is thus necessary that we should examine this present cruelty, not with the aim of arousing hatred, but with the calm purpose of redressing a great wrong. Hitler has already laid down the axiom that a lie has only to be a huge lie in order to gain credence; it would seem that to this he has added another axiom of conduct, which is the reverse of the former; namely, that an act of cruelty, if huge enough, will never be believed. It is the calculated magnitude of his present cruelty which arouses scepticism.

Of the facts published by the Polish Government there can be no doubt whatever. In October, 1940, the Germans interned 433,000 Warsaw Jews in a special area or ghetto which they surrounded with a high wall. In March, 1941, Himmler visited Poland and decreed that 50 per cent. of the Polish Jews should be exterminated before the end of 1942.

Massacres had already taken place at Vilna, Tarnopol and Cholm. After Himmler's visit the systematic extermination of the ghetto Jews was planned with bureaucratic efficiency. On July 22nd, 1942, an order was issued for 'the trans-settlement of the Jewish population of Warsaw,' which provided that no fewer than 6,000 persons should be deported every day. Skilled workers were retained, but the remaining Jews were taken away in batches and packed into goods trucks, 120 people being crushed into trucks with room only for 40. They were then taken to the execution camps at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor, where they were stripped and murdered. By September 1st some 250,000 people had been deported. 'For the month of September,' runs the Polish report, '120,000 ration cards were printed, for October only 40,000.' In order to assist them in this mass murder the Germans have enrolled into execution squads the scum of the Baltic provinces and the Ukraine. These bands are called *junaks* and are able by indiscriminate murder to speed up the work of the more slowly moving bureaucratic machine. The details of these atrocities need not be mentioned, but the main facts are clear. They are these. In order to assuage his insane hatred of the Jewish people Hitler, with Himmler as his main agent, has carried out the murder of some 250,000 men, women and children in cold blood. He can plead no military necessity; he can place no responsibility upon some sudden blood-lust among his troops; in the whole of recorded history there has never been a massacre so needless, so scientific, so enormous, or so deliberate.

I am glad that the effect of these revelations upon the House of Commons should have provoked a demonstration as unusual as it was solemn. It is true that by shouting and shaking our fists from the other side of the wall we may only provoke our enemies to derisive laughter. It is true also that any threats which we may make, any statements of retribution, are unlikely to reach the ears of the *junaks* or arouse the apprehensions or consciences of their employers. Hitler himself is impervious to Christian feeling. He has himself re-

pudiated 'the Jewish Christ-creed with its effeminate pity-ethics' even as he has proclaimed, 'One is either a German or a Christian. One cannot be both.' I have little hope that anything which is done or said in Great Britain or the United States is likely to affect either the assassins or their leaders. Yet the German people as a whole do not, and will never, approve of such extreme cruelty and even in a dictatorship public opinion is of some account. It is by no means impossible, by informing the German people of what has happened at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor to associate such names with an uneasy feeling of shame. They will not believe it at first; but if we apply constant repetition, a pattern of doubt and questioning can be created; and stories will drift back from Eastern Europe which will suggest to them that something horrible and degrading has in fact occurred. We can at the same time revise our obstinate policy in regard to refugees and inform neutral Governments that we shall be willing, in view of these events, to relieve them of some at least of the refugees who are fleeing from Hitlerism. Such are the positive steps which we can take. They are not much; but they are something.

Nor can the pity and terror aroused by these events fail to purify our own resolve and conduct. It may help us to approach the Palestinian problem with greater energy, imagination and unselfishness. It will certainly teach us to treat our Jewish fellow-citizens with deeper sympathy and to condemn all anti-semitic whisperings as ungenerous and uncivilised. And it will remind us that there are certain basic principles of humanity, which have nothing whatsoever to do with race or creed or class; in regard to which we, the great peoples of the Anglo-Saxon stock, have reached a very high degree of consciousness and conscience; in defence of which during these three sad years of struggle we have endured much tribulation; and in the triumph of which assuredly we shall render impossible the recurrence throughout the earth of such shameful catacombs as those of Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor.

27. THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN WAR*

IN HIS popular but discomfoting study of *Conditions of Peace*, Professor E. H. Carr assures us that we are passing through a silent revolution against 'the three predominant ideas of the nineteenth century—liberal democracy, national self-determination and *laissez-faire* economics.' It is true that the present current in favour of collectivism is strong and swift. Yet it is, after all, only a current; it is not a tide; and when victory comes, it may well be that conflicting currents may develop, taking the form of a reaction against the unusual in favour of the accustomed, of a reaction against planning in favour of enterprise, of a reaction against Hitler's New Order in favour of intense local patriotism. If we are fortunate in our statesmen and the mood of the time, it may be that between these conflicting currents we shall find the Middle Way, and be able to evolve a system under which we shall acquire the benefits of nationalism without its terrible defects and enjoy the stimulus of private enterprise without incurring the chaos of uncontrolled competition. But if it were true, as the Professor asserts, that the younger generation have not only lost all affection for liberal democracy, but have actually developed towards it a revolutionary desire for destruction, then indeed we should be faced with the paradox of fighting for formulas which when victory comes we shall ourselves discard; then indeed I, for one, should share with Professor Carr his mood of wry defeatism. I do not believe this to be true: I do not believe that the country as a whole has lost its confidence in parliamentary institutions.

It is inevitable in time of war that the national interest in, and respect for, the functioning of Parliament should suffer decline. The public are conscious that their immediate destiny will be affected not by what may happen in the lobbies of the House of Commons, but by what may happen at Tebourbah

*January 1, 1943.

or Voronezh. The party truce, the existence of a Coalition Government, deprive parliamentary action of that acute sense of competition and struggle which makes so deep an appeal to the sporting instincts of our race. The desire to maintain a united front and to avoid all factious criticism induces the more serious politicians to relapse into silence and the resultant vacuum is often filled by windy words and feeble personalities. The need to withhold all useful information from the enemy imposes upon our leaders the need to withhold information from our own public, and to resort when necessary to the disconcerting device of secret sessions. And the fact that the present House of Commons is already more than seven years old inevitably detracts from its representative authority. All these factors combine to throw a mist of unreality over present parliamentary proceedings and to provide material for criticism to those who, whether from the right or from the left, contend that liberal democracy is in fact an outworn formula and that Parliament is but a fiction of little value to the Corporate State. To such critics there is one unanswerable reply. It is this: 'What, in the fourth winter of war, would be the effect on public opinion if Parliament were permanently to adjourn?' Supposing that the British War Cabinet were to make a mistake as gigantic as that committed by Hitler when he invaded Russia? Supposing that a branch of the British fighting services were to display inefficiency as terrible as that shown by the German medical services in the winter of 1941? How would our public, in the face of such an error, in the face of such a scandal, feel if they were deprived of the certitude that through their elected representatives they could obtain in such matters drastic alteration and redress? There can be only one answer to such a question.

The present House of Commons has no need, however, to defend itself on negative grounds or to suggest so extreme an alternative. It can look back with pride and self-congratulation upon its conduct during a year of almost impenetrable difficulty. Members are well aware that, in spite of Sir

Stafford Cripps' tetchy rebuke, they have worked assiduously, both at Westminster and in their constituencies. They are aware that many excellent debates have taken place, many sound and constructive speeches have been made, upon such a variety of themes as India, the Colonial Empire, the organisation of the fighting services, the flow of production, family pensions, currency and loans, the control of venereal disease, the persecution of the Jews, the policy of internment, and the rights of the subject against the executive. They are aware that for one hour of every sitting day Ministers have been exposed to a barrage of questioning, in which matters of high policy or detailed administration are brought into the clear light of day. They are aware that throughout the year they have dealt personally with an unending flow of correspondence, seeking here to redress an anomaly, there to right an injustice. They are aware that week after week they have sought to interpret to their constituents the needs and dangers of the moment, and to report to those in power what the counties, the boroughs and the great cities are feeling at every successive stage of the war. They are aware that in their relations with their fellow-members they have sought on every occasion to extend their own knowledge and to increase their understanding. They can look back upon a year of desperate anxiety and labour, conscious that they at least have not been deficient in energy or clear thinking. It may be that no new Parliamentary figure of the first rank has emerged during the last twelve months. It may be that the majority of members are but ordinary people reacting to events in an ordinary way. But we can at least affirm that we have fulfilled Grote's famous dictum: 'A House of Commons cannot afford to be above its own constituencies in intelligence, knowledge or patriotism.'

Or have we not, in fact, during this last year, risen above Grote's level? I think so. It may be correct to attribute to the Prime Minister's high qualities of character and intelligence the domination which throughout this difficult year he has exercised over Parliament. But it is also true that the con-

tinuity of resolution manifested by Members must be ascribed to 'the sense of the House.' In the dark days of last winter, faced as we were by disasters in Africa and the Far East, disturbed as we were by such appalling incidents as the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the escape of the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau* at a moment when the public were confused and even confounded, the House of Commons affirmed its confidence in Mr. Churchill by a vote of 464 to one. 'The ordeals,' proclaimed Mr. Churchill, 'through which we shall have to pass will be tormenting and protracted.' They were indeed. We lost Burma and our garrison surrendered at Tobruk. That, indeed, was a moment when confidence was shaken, and when the minds of men were disturbed by doubts regarding our higher strategy and doubts regarding the equipment and organisation of our troops. Yet when at the very height of our distress Sir John Wardlaw-Milne put down his motion of no confidence, he was defeated by a majority of 450 votes. At the time also when the clamour for a second front in Europe was insistent and wide-spread in the constituencies, the Members of the House of Commons refused to be stampeded. A more nervous, a less sensible, House might well during those excited days have acted intemperately. It has since been rewarded for its patience and good faith.

I am aware that through this article there runs a note of complacency. I am aware that in paying a tribute to the good sense of my colleagues I may be indulging in oblique self-praise. The example of the Prime Minister should teach us all that self-congratulation is the resort of little men, and that the wisest man is he who refrains from saying 'I told you so.' Yet I am convinced that the conduct of the House of Commons during the past year is a striking affirmation of the principles of liberal democracy; that the people have been accorded representation which, although out-dated, although seldom brilliant and sometimes foolish, although unimpressive in detail, is surely impressive in the mass and has shown a corporate intelligence and courage of a level higher than that of its component parts.

28. A.B.C.A. AND THE BEVERIDGE REPORT*

IN THE House of Commons, on Tuesday, Mr. Dugdale asked the Secretary of State for War why the War Office withdrew from circulation the pamphlet on his own Report which Sir William Beveridge had written for the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (A.B.C.A.). This strange episode has already formed the theme of an admirable article by Mr. J. Mackay-Mure in *The Spectator* of January 8th, an article which provoked two interesting letters in last week's issue. I may perhaps be forgiven for recurring to the subject, since it goes beyond the area of a merely departmental incident and raises considerations regarding the morale of the Army, the training and education of the citizen soldier and the relations between the junior officer and his men. The official explanation of the withdrawal of this pamphlet is, it would seem that it was written and circulated without the knowledge of the Secretary of State; that it represented the opinion of Sir William Beveridge upon the Beveridge Report; that this Report had not as yet been discussed in Parliament or received, even in principle, the approbation of the Government; that, on the contrary, it is a document of a highly controversial nature, to many of the recommendations of which strong objection is felt both in Conservative and Labour quarters; that therefore it was a mistake to issue under the aegis, and therefore with the applied approval, of the War Office an explanatory pamphlet on a matter which is still *sub judice*; and that in any case the A.B.C.A. discussions assume the form of a 'compulsory parade,' and are therefore unsuited to the elucidation of any important question. As a general rule it is no doubt desirable that Government Departments should not, even by implication, express approval of measures upon which neither Parliament nor the Government have come to a decision. But the Beveridge Report was not a

*January 22, 1943.

usual event: it was an exceptional event; and the pamphlet which Sir William drafted was written not in advocacy, but in objective explanation. It did no more than provide the Army, in a summary and very lucid form, with the recommendations which had already been published. It did not and could not, prejudice the main issue.

Even those purists, however, who may regret the issue of the pamphlet as representing some slight divergence from established convention, would agree that to withdraw it from circulation after it had been issued was an ill-considered action. It was an action which suggests to ignorant observers that the Secretary of State and Lord Croft have not fully understood either the function or the achievements of A.B.C.A. Let me first explain the purpose and working of that admirable innovation. The Army Bureau of Current Affairs is a section of the Welfare and Education Directorate which works under the Adjutant-General. Every week it circulates to all units throughout the Army a red or blue pamphlet in which simple information is given, either regarding current military questions or regarding such wider problems as are known to be engaging the interest, and sometimes confusing the minds, of the ordinary soldier. The idea is that these pamphlets should be placed in the hands of junior officers who should use them as the basis for discussion with the men of their platoons. The purpose of this system is threefold. In the first place, it provides junior officers with information upon a variety of subjects, and to that extent it enlarges the range of their interests. In the second place, it enables them through the medium of these discussions, to establish with their men an intelligent understanding upon a plane remote from ordinary military routine. And in the third place it provides the men themselves with the opportunity of learning that great problems are not as simple as at first they may appear. It does more than this. It goes some way to mitigate among the men the deadening sense that they are no longer individuals, but a mere number on the list; that the orders to which they are subjected bear little relation

to the outlines of the war as a whole; and that a civilian, when lost in military mass, ceases to be of any personal importance. If properly carried out the A.B.C.A. discussion groups should encourage some sense of solidarity between the private soldier and 'The Army,' and assure the ordinary conscript that those who hold his life in their hands do not underestimate his intelligence, and are prepared to take him into their confidence, and to listen to his opinion.

These are admirable purposes. It is not suggested that every young platoon-commander is capable of giving to them the effect which is desired. But the intelligent officer is by this method provided with a salutary opportunity, and in many cases this opportunity is grasped to the great benefit of all concerned. Now, all those whose special business it is to consider the welfare of a citizen army are aware that there are certain constant preoccupations by which the morale of the ordinary soldier is apt to be lowered and his zest decreased. There is, in the first place, anxiety regarding his own position in the post-war world, and the dread of unemployment and indigence when victory comes. There is in the second place acute anxiety about the fate of his wife and family should he be killed or maimed. And there is in the third place an incessant and gnawing doubt whether 'They' (by which is meant all those in authority, from the War Cabinet down to the regimental sergeant-major) are genuinely concerned with the interests of the private soldier and his dependants. At times of depression these doubts amount to a feeling that great sacrifices are being demanded of him for the ultimate benefit of someone else. Inevitably the young soldier, pestered by these worries and suspicions (having sufficient education to distrust the judgement of others, and not sufficient education to reach firm conclusions of his own), slides away from reality, and even reason, into a day-dream world in which the pinnacles of Moscow glimmer as the dream-city in which 'They' are always 'We.' To these confusions of the mind A.B.C.A. should offer a useful antidote; but it is an antidote which can only soothe and comfort if confidence is acquired and retained.

It is for this reason that many regret the withdrawal of the Beveridge pamphlet. Here was a scheme, which in simple terms offered to the individual some hope of future security. Here was a scheme which, in firm outlines, did, in fact, suggest that 'They' were aware of the immense importance attached to economic security by the ordinary man. Here was a scheme which provided some ultimate purpose, and raised the hope that Great Britain, which in the nineteenth century had achieved political liberty without revolution, might in the twentieth secure economic freedom without tyranny. It is not to be supposed that I wish to prejudge future discussion by asserting that the Beveridge report is practicable in every detail; I am merely contending that it has, rightly or wrongly, come to symbolise for the ordinary citizen some alternative to extreme fantasies. The withdrawal of the pamphlet, however reasonable it may seem to those trained in departmental or legislative procedure, will produce upon the citizen soldiers the impression that 'They' are hostile to the Beveridge Report, and desire to limit the discussion of all subjects which do not meet with their sympathy or approval. Such an impression will tend to diminish the credit of A.B.C.A., to negative much of the work already accomplished, and to throw a shadow of suspicion over its future activities. The War Office has unfortunately been forced by this episode, and much against its will, into the appearance of taking sides in an economic controversy. It is rumoured that the blame for this ill-considered action does not rest with the military chiefs in Whitehall; and that Sir Ronald Adam, the Adjutant-General, has, in fact, from the first been one of the most ardent and imaginative of A.B.C.A.'s supporters. It is suggested rather that such influence as was brought to bear was exercised by men who have had little recent or direct experience of the thoughts and feelings of the modern soldier. It is, of course, easy to magnify the importance and effect of an incident which may be shortly forgotten; but it is sad that the efficacy of a valuable experiment, such as A.B.C.A., should be hampered by errors not its own.

29. THE FUTURE OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

I HAVE been reading this week a pamphlet by Mr. J. H. Simpson, Principal of the College of St. Mark and St. John, which throws an interesting sidelight upon the problem of our Public Schools. Mr. Simpson was for twelve years headmaster of a small boarding-school, in which the majority of pupils came from working-class, or lower middle-class, homes. He is thus one of the few men who have had direct and prolonged experience of the effect of the boarding-school system upon the working-class boy. His views, for this reason, merit every attention. His argument is based upon the assumption that, whereas a few Public Schools may be able for some years to survive the New Economic Order, most of them will be unable to maintain themselves without financial assistance from the State. He asks whether such assistance would be justified, or in other words whether the taxpayer would obtain a really useful return for his money. He therefore addresses himself to the problem whether the virtues and advantages taught or provided by our Public Schools could, by some readjustment of our educational machinery, be rendered available to children in the lower income groups. This leads him to an examination of these advantages and to the consideration whether in fact they could be transferred or transmitted to the boys and girls of the elementary day school.

Mr. Simpson asserts that there are seven main virtues or advantages which are generally associated with the Public School system. The man who has had the privilege of a Public School education is generally free from feelings of social inferiority, is more confident and assured in his dealings with his fellow-men, and is 'less prone to certain mean habits of thought and action which come from an attitude towards life which is primarily defensive.' Enjoying as he does the advantages of a comparatively cultured home, he

*January 29, 1943.

becomes more adept in the art of living. In the course of his training he acquires a sense of responsibility towards those who are less fortunately situated than himself. The Public School boy, moreover, inherits a long religious tradition, acquires pride in his own school, and learns to act loyally towards his masters and school-fellows. And, finally, the fact that at a tender age he is removed from home influence and urban surroundings has a marked, and upon the whole a beneficial, influence upon his health and character. How many of these seven advantages, asks Mr. Simpson, are transferable and how many are exclusive? He contends that the first three (namely, social self-confidence, a cultural home and responsibility towards the less fortunate) are not transferable, since they depend not upon any educational machinery, but upon the present condition of society. According as income-levels become more uniform these class distinctions will tend to diminish, and the sense of responsibility will merge, as it has merged in the United States, into a diffused social conscience. The next three advantages (religious tradition, pride and loyalty) will, without State intervention, be acquired by secondary day schools once they are able to settle denominational problems and to acquire greater prestige and self-reliance. Thus of the seven virtues or advantages provided by the Public School system, three are not transferable and three are not exclusive. It is in his opinion imprudent to spend large sums of public money upon something which you will never get or upon something which you will acquire in any case. Mr. Simpson concludes, therefore, that 'it is not in the national interest that money should be spent by the State with the direct object of preserving the Public Schools.'

Mr. Simpson's argument is not, however, wholly negative. He is left with his seventh virtue, namely, the advantage derived from the boarding system in itself. He has little doubt that it is of value to a boy (and presumably to a girl also) to be away from home for certain periods before the age of eighteen. He agrees that the rural surroundings, the amenities and the beauty of many of our Public Schools do confer a

distinct physical and mental benefit upon those who are privileged to enjoy them. He would like to see those benefits extended to the children of poor parents, although he feels that the four years at present devoted to Public School education are too protracted, and that a year, or even six months, should suffice to meet all requirements. His proposal is therefore that those of the Public Schools which are unable to maintain themselves without State assistance should be turned into 'reception schools' or 'short-period boarding-schools' to which day-school children could be transferred for a certain period of their course. Subject to this exception he would let the Public Schools sink or swim without assistance from the State.

Mr. Simpson's pamphlet is impressive, since it deals objectively and from an unusual angle with a problem which is often blurred either by prejudice or by sentiment. There are those who detest the Public School system because it is to their minds the symbol, and perhaps even the cause, of class distinctions. There are those whose attitude towards the problem is coloured by sentimental affections and who are unable to approach it with reason or with calm. If it be wholly true that the Public School system is the expression of social and economic conditions rather than the expression of a conscious educational theory, then it is probable that before the century closes the whole system will have become an anachronism. As such, it could scarcely be preserved by subsidies from the Exchequer. But is this assumption wholly true? It may well have been a misfortune that the different levels of our educational system should have tended to coincide with the different levels of income, rank or status. But it would be incorrect to assume that our Public Schools mean nothing more than reserved enclosures in which the children of the rich are given a luxury education. The resentment which this assumption has created tempts people to ignore, or to minimise, the educational value which the system possesses. In fact, the Seven Virtues which Mr. Simpson defines, and then eliminates, do not by any means comprise the total range of advantage offered by a Public

School. There are other valuable virtues which are taught or absorbed to an extent not found in any other country or under any other system. There is the virtue of humility, which is the foundation of any proper exercise of power; there is tolerance, which is the companion of reason; under the Public School system boys learn to differentiate between conceit and pride, between authority and arrogance, between obedience and subservience. The very harshness of the system fortifies character more often than it warps it; and if the purpose of education be to adjust the individual to the group, then the processes of adjustment practised at a Public School are certainly more effective than any which I have observed abroad. I doubt whether these advantages are provided to the same extent by any day-school.

I am reminded of a phrase which occurs in Mr. J. F. Roxburgh's little book, *Eleutheros*. 'If,' he wrote in 1930, 'the best of the English Public Schools . . . can select and secure the very best young Englishmen of each generation, this country will begin to build up a new aristocracy of character and capacity such as the world has not hitherto seen.' So far from abolishing the Public Schools or allowing them to perish from inanition, Mr. Roxburgh would open their doors to the best boys from the elementary day-schools. Mr. Simpson would not agree with this suggestion, since he is opposed to the theory that the Public Schools should allot free or special places to boys from elementary day-schools. He points out that this method would mean that the ablest working-class boys were segregated from their fellows at the age of twelve; that the secondary day-schools would thereby be deprived of their most promising material and relegated 'to a recognised second-best'; and that it is doubtful whether the boys thus transplanted would in fact achieve either happiness or self-confidence. I am impressed by this argument, since Mr. Simpson has very special experience of the problem he is discussing. But I hope none the less that when Mr. Butler comes to frame the great Education Act of 1943 he will devise some means by which our Public Schools shall cease to be purely private.

30. THE REFORM OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE*

THE WHITE PAPER upon the Reform of the Foreign Service is a document of importance. For more than thirty years there have been many of us (both inside and outside the Service) who have longed and striven for some such reorganisation. The scheme now foreshadowed is more fundamental than any readjustment of departmental machinery; it is an indication that the whole system of our representation abroad is to be radically altered; it is a plan which only a man of Mr. Eden's imagination and personal authority could have devised or could hope to carry through. The proposed reforms fall under three main headings. An entirely new method is provided for the recruitment, selection and training of candidates; the Diplomatic Service, the Commercial Diplomatic Service and the Consular Service are to be amalgamated into a single unit; and legislation is to be introduced to enable the Secretary of State to remove lethargic officials before they reach the prescribed age of retirement. Each of these three reforms is an improvement; in combination they should provide the country with a Foreign Service perfectly adapted to any New Order which may emerge. The main criticisms which have have in the past been directed against our Foreign Service are three in number. It has been contended (not always with full knowledge of the circumstances) that the Foreign Service is a privileged profession reserved for the sons of the rich and great. It has been said, and with greater justification, that the qualifications and functions of our younger diplomatists are so narrow as to limit their capacity for dealing with the economic and social problems of the age. And it has been asserted that their origins and training unfit them for mixing easily with every class of society in the foreign countries to which they are

*February 5, 1943.

posted. The reforms now proposed should remedy these defects by widening the basis not only of recruitment, but also of training and experience.

Under the heading of recruitment the scheme throws the Foreign Service open to all competitors: the Foreign Office Selection Board is to be abolished. It is true, of course, that this Board did not, as some supposed, reject candidates who had not been educated at a leading Public School, nor did it, in fact, attach importance to purely social qualifications. Yet the existence of the Board did in practice deter many admirable young men from undergoing the ordeal of a personal interview in fear lest rejection might imply some slur upon their charm or breeding. I am delighted that the Board will cease to exist; its value was always outweighed by the prejudice and suspicion it aroused. The framers of these proposed reforms were, however, wise enough to see that it was not merely the existence of a preliminary Selection Board which frightened many of the poorer candidates away. It is essential in any Foreign Service that candidates should possess a perfect knowledge of at least two foreign languages; to learn such languages necessitates prolonged residence in the countries in which they are spoken; and the fact that during this period of study abroad a young man was withdrawn from employment tended in itself to limit recruitment to those who during their nineteenth and twentieth years could afford to live on their own resources. This difficulty will be met by providing candidates who have passed the first examination with travelling studentships for a period of eighteen months. The examinations and training expected of candidates will fall into three distinct stages. First there will be a competitive examination similar to that for the Home or Indian Civil Service, requiring no specialised knowledge. As an alternative to this examination, and admittedly as an experiment, a certain proportion of candidates will be 'selected' mainly on the basis of their record or personality. Candidates who have either passed the first examination, or have been 'selected' on their general merits,

will then be accorded travelling studentships to enable them to study abroad. On the completion of this stage they will return to London and be subjected to a second examination in the foreign languages and specialised subjects which they will have studied during their period of studentship. If they pass that examination they will become members of the Foreign Service.

The second of the proposed reforms provides for the fusion of the three existing branches (the Diplomatic, the Commercial and the Consular) into a single amalgamated Foreign Service. The advantage which will be gained by this fusion requires some explanation. Under the old system these three branches were kept in water-tight compartments; a Consul was discouraged from occupying himself with political matters, and a Diplomatist was not supposed to be interested in trade or commerce. Moreover, whereas the ambitious Consul had practically no prospect of ever becoming an Ambassador, the laziest Diplomatist (provided the bricks he dropped were few or silent) could count with ease upon obtaining at least a Legation. The effect of the amalgamation of the three branches should be most beneficial. It will immediately increase the area of interest and energy throughout the Service; it will give the able Consul or Commercial Counsellor the chance of competing for the highest posts on equal terms; it will provide the Secretary of State with a larger reservoir both of appointments and of men to fill them; and it will furnish the younger men not only with better and more varied prospects of advancement, but also with more intensive and extensive experience. I am well aware, for instance, that if during my two and a half years in Turkey I had worked in the Vice-Consulate at Adana, I should have learnt far more about the Middle East than I ever did as Attaché to the Embassy in Constantinople. There is another danger, inherent in all professional service abroad, which these reforms seek to mitigate. In the old days the men who remained in Downing Street were apt to be dangerously ignorant of foreign conditions, whereas those who spent their

life abroad tended to forget all that they had ever known of England. Measures are envisaged by which the members of the Foreign Service shall from time to time be given refresher courses at home and opportunities to acquaint themselves not merely with conditions in Great Britain, but with Dominion and Imperial Affairs. This, assuredly, is a prudent provision.

The third of the drastic reforms suggested is that by which, under a Superannuation Bill, the Secretary of State can remove from the Service men whose laziness or incapacity is widely recognised. Hitherto the Foreign Office have hesitated to dismiss a man who had not yet qualified for a pension and whose past services, although futile, had given no cause for scandal or extreme reproach. A bottle-neck was thus created, and the more energetic men, discouraged by the wedge of incompetents in front of them, were apt to resign and seek their fortunes elsewhere. It is noticeable in this connexion that in the present Parliament those who exchanged diplomacy for politics have all, in one way or another, reached the front bench. It is to be hoped that under the revised system the ambitious men will be encouraged to stay. It is to be hoped also that, once the Superannuation Bill is passed, the ridiculous compromise by which even the ablest Ambassador was retired at sixty will be allowed to lapse.

The scheme as outlined in the White Paper is to my mind wholly admirable. I have only one suggestion to make. Now that the Diplomatic Service is to be enlarged, it will no longer be possible for those responsible for making appointments to have intimate personal knowledge of all the candidates for promotion. The man who has been favoured by fortune, opportunity or an enlightened chief will have an unfair advantage over the man who has never had a proper chance or who has had the misfortune to incur the dislike of his Ambassador or Minister. If appointments are not to be largely fortuitous, some sieve or test will be necessary. The only possible sieve is a Staff College, on the analogy of the Army, into which a man enters at the age of thirty to thirty-

five. Those who pass the Staff College will have in principle a prior claim to the plums of the profession. Without some such thinning-out of the middle category of aspirants the danger may arise that ambitious men will seek to attract attention by dramatic deeds or to gain favour by agreeable despatches. This could only do the Service harm.

31. WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT*

ON SATURDAY last was reached the twenty-fifth anniversary of Women's Suffrage; on that day a quarter of a century ago the Royal Assent was given to the Bill which first recognised women as part of the electorate. It seems strange to us today that this concession, which to our minds appears so just and so inevitable, should between 1905 and 1914 have aroused so fierce a controversy. There were those who forecast that this extension of the franchise would subject England and the Empire to a monstrous regiment of women. Even those who favoured the principle were horrified by the tactics followed by the extremists, and contended that in no circumstances could any Government surrender to these processes of intimidation. It must be admitted that during 1912 and 1913 the suffrage movement assumed somewhat hysterical proportions; there were moments when it acquired the shrill frenzy of the *Bacchae*; maenads in the shape of Agave and her chorus raved around the cowering head of the governmental Pentheus; the public mind was startled and shocked. The First German War put an end to militancy; those who had opposed the suffrage in principle came to see that their theory was unreasonable; those who supported the movement were able by devoted service in the war to give to their cause a dignity and an inevitability which it had almost lost through agitation. A long hush descended, and the final stage of the journey was completed as silently as a ship slides into Southampton after Atlantic gales.

After twenty-five years we can look back upon this turbulent passage and consider how far Women's Suffrage has altered the temper of the electorate or changed the quality of Parliament. In so far as the electorate is concerned, the grant of Women's Suffrage has tended, in combination with other influences, to throw emphasis upon domestic reforms at the expense of foreign and imperial policy. There can be little

*February 12, 1943.

doubt that the influence of the woman voter has, in the interval between the two wars, given impetus to the improvement of our social services, and that such domestic concerns as housing, health and child-welfare have benefited enormously from the interest and energy which women have displayed. It might be contended, on the other hand, that the apathy which, during the same period, was shown in regard to our external responsibilities, and even in regard to national security, was to no small degree due to the lack of interest felt by the woman elector in such subjects. It is easy to exaggerate this effect, since there were other factors which gave to politics a predominantly domestic emphasis; yet the influence of the woman elector was certainly a contributory, although never a determinant, cause in this shifting of interest from outside to within. Every politician who has had to deal frequently with women electors knows that in the mass they are more interested in problems which fall within their own sphere of experience than in matters which are to them impersonal; nor is it conceivable that the modern electorate would be deeply stirred by any Eastern question or stampered by any Midlothian campaign. Yet, apart from this noticeable shifting of emphasis, it could not be said that the grant of Women's Suffrage has changed the temper of the electorate as fundamentally as in 1918 was either hoped or feared.

What effect has the admission of women had upon the House of Commons? Those veterans who remember Parliament before the first war assert that the advent of the women had less effect upon the atmosphere of the House than was occasioned by the departure of the Irish. To the present Parliament the women Members make an effective, rather than a distinctive, contribution. Miss Ellen Wilkinson is an admirable Under-Secretary, and has maintained in office that energy and courage which she displayed while in opposition. Miss Florence Horsburgh combines great modesty of demeanour with a sound and solid mind. Miss Lloyd George shares with her brother the honour of being the best-liked

Member in the House. Mrs. Tate sails like a frigate into battle, aiming trimly and unerringly at the very centre of the enemy's line. Mrs. Cazalet Keir is alert and industrious, and her supplementary questions are often forceful and to the point. Lady Astor, who was not intended by Nature to be a House of Commons man, is able to smooth by her unflinching friendliness the feathers which she ruffles by her unflinching interruptions; nor are there many Members whose record in their constituencies, whether in peace or war, can compare with hers. Miss Eleanor Rathbone's voracious championship of the forgotten or the oppressed may irritate the Front Bench, but arouses on all other benches feelings of respect. Compared to her, even Mr. Stokes appears tongue-tied and timorous. The other women Members are never foolish and often wise. But to the casual observer it might seem that the women in the House of Commons do not display any marked solidarity, and do not constitute any distinctive element. To all seeming with their variations of temperament and ability, they are much the same as the men.

This is as it should be. But having watched them with curious attention for more than seven years, I think I can detect certain common and constant qualities which the women Members manifest to a degree greater than the men. They are, as might be expected, more intensely interested in all subjects affecting the family and the home. They are able, moreover, to bring to the discussion of these subjects not merely a more intimate experience, but a greater intensity of passion. The male legislator is often deterred from pressing home his points by sympathy for some harassed Minister or by a desire not to be self-assertive and a nuisance. A woman member, having once identified herself with a cause or problem, is discouraged by no such inhibition. I should say also that women are less impressed than men by the majesty of the Front Bench. A man is apt, when assailing a Cabinet Minister, to reflect that behind his opponent are arrayed battalions of red boxes, batteries of blue books, vast reserves of special information, the whole armoury of knowledge and

legions of gifted Civil Servants. A woman is impeded by no such reverence; she dislikes officials, she loathes special information, and she has an instinctive feeling that knowledge, if not actually untruthful, is at least inapplicable to the cause she has at heart. I am not suggesting that women are less modest than men; far from it. I am suggesting only that their intensity is greater, and they are less easily silenced by the overt apparatus of authority:

I should imagine also that since the historic day when the first woman Member tripped into the House, our female legislators have gone some way to discover their own formula. The last vestiges of feminism are gradually disappearing, nor do I often observe a trace of inferiority-feelings or any overt bitterness for the repression of ten thousand years. The women Members are adult and self-possessed. 'All this pitting of sex against sex,' wrote Virginia Woolf in 1929, 'all this claiming of superiority and imputing of inferiority, belong to the private-school stage of human existence, where there are sides.' The women have passed that stage; they do not take sides. They have been wise to begin by specialising in those areas of politics, in those causes, of which they have direct experience and in regard to which their counsel is powerful and intense. They have (if the Editor of *The Spectator* will allow me to say so) been wise to eschew at first those other areas in which their counsel, as Aristotle remarked, might fail to be authoritative. Their influence in the House, within the areas they have selected, is more constant and more effective than that of any minority group. And this is because they have understood that their relation to the majority is neither competitive nor imitative, but complementary.

32. THE VIEUX PORT AT MARSEILLES*

IT IS said that the modern generation have no sense of wonder. In 1843, for instance, the vicar's little boy at Market Harborough would have thought of the ocean as some silver cloth patterned with golden crowns, and of the Lord Mayor of London as something superhuman—as a large turtle, in fact, dressed entirely in fur. The same little boy in 1943 would be subject to no such visions; at the local Odeon or Regal he would have seen the north seas curling in dark rage or the south seas shimmering with flying fish and dolphins; and on Sunday evenings, sitting by the vicarage fire, he would have heard the Lord Mayor proclaiming the Week's Good Cause. It is inevitable, I suppose, that the imagination of the young must today be much diluted; they have seen the fingers of Papuan fishermen drying their nets under the palm trees; they have watched the sappers in the Libyan desert auscultating for land-mines with the gestures of a housemaid working the electrolux; for them nothing is so remote as to be unfamiliar, nothing so unusual as to be unexpected, nothing so impossible as to be improbable; there exists for them no lovely barrier between the known and the unknown. The war itself invades their privacy: what did the Vicar's little boy know of Liao-Yang, or Magersfontein, or even of Gheluvelt? Today his bed will make a little leap on the linoleum and next morning he will find the cucumber-frame a shatter of broken glass. We have become accustomed during this war to the intrusion of the extraordinary upon the ordinary, and we read without surprise of the destruction of rooms or buildings of which from childhood we have known the very feel and smell. It was not always like that. Even in the last war we were startled when the flame of battle came to scorch areas within our own orbit of familiar-

*February 19, 1943.

ity. It was so different from the Modder River; so different from Omdurman.

I remember in the early days of the last war travelling up from Sevenoaks with a man in a brown suit. He sat down heavily, adjusted the pink rose in his buttonhole, rose again to put his grey hat in the rack above him, and opened his newspaper. A few seconds later he gave a loud snort of anger and surprise. 'But it's incredible,' he exclaimed, 'I cannot believe it!' I glanced across at him in patient, and I hope polite, enquiry. 'Did you see that?' he asked in outraged astonishment, 'The Germans have occupied Namur. Why only last Easter my wife and I were bicycling in Belgium and we went to Namur. I cannot believe it.' He pushed the paper angrily into the cushion behind him. 'Incredible' he murmured again with flushed cheeks. The train entered the tunnel and he sat there with a perplexed and insulted expression on his face. 'You see,' he began again, 'I remember it as if it were yesterday. There were cliffs and a river and a little inn by the water side with a striped awning and shrubs in green wooden boxes. Why there may be Uhlans sitting in the very seat, at the very table, where we had our coffee! I cannot believe it. It seems incredible to me.' Until that morning war had meant to him something purely trans-oceanic; suddenly it had become continental; he was still panting slightly when the train reached London Bridge. Within a few hours the Uhlans swept onwards to other areas of familiarity; Louvain and Brussels and then Ostend. I never saw my friend with the pink buttonhole again; I suppose that he joined Kitchener's army; he may well have been killed upon the Somme. But his indignation that morning has often recurred to me. I pass the ruins of the Temple Church, I pass the ruins of Crown Office Row, and I murmur to myself 'It is incredible, I do not believe it'—even as the man in the brown suit murmured twenty-nine years ago.

In general we have by now come to accept this mingling of the extraordinary with the familiar. When I see photographs of Hitler grinning his moron grin within the Madel-

eine, or gazing dramatically from the terrace of the Trocadero upon the vast legs of the Eiffel Tower, I am filled with acute distaste, but not with astonishment. I have come to take it for granted that Italian carabinieri should guard the entrance to the Acropolis, nor am I really startled when I see photographs of German sentries in the Place Vendôme. We have become inured to these insults to the dignity of Europe. Yet suddenly something happens which shakes one out of this mood of patient acceptance, some combination occurs between the familiar and the extraordinary which sets one panting with indignation even as my man in the brown suit panted that August morning in 1914. Such a moment came to me when I heard that the Germans had occupied the Vieux-Port at Marseilles and driven the inhabitants from their homes. The voice of Monsieur Paul Creyssel, a propagandist of the Croix de Feu, came over the wireless from Radio-Paris. He sought to justify the German action. 'Even,' he said, 'if the German military authorities had not enforced this evacuation, for reasons which it is not our business to examine, the French Government would have ordered the civil population to leave the neighbourhood of the harbour. This area of Marseilles is so densely populated that in the event of attack from the air many thousands of civilians would have lost their lives.' I can understand that the Germans may wish to construct in the Vieux-Port a concrete kennel for their submarines. I can understand that they may think it necessary to remove the civilian population from the proximity of this intended nest. But to hear a French citizen seeking to justify this action, and the brutality by which it was accompanied, makes my gorge rise with nausea.

'This area of Marseilles . . . ' says Monsieur Paul Creyssel, as if he were speaking of the Bassin d'Arenc or the Bassin de la Joliette, where the great liners moor. The Vieux-Port is something more than seventy acres of harbour-water enclosed by quays and enlivened by the spars of little ships. It is something more than the sunniest spot in Europe with the women at the windows singing each to each. Does Monsieur

Creysse realise the blasphemy that he utters when he refers to those historic acres as 'cette région de la ville'? The Vieux-Port was a haven of merchandise and commerce in the days when London and Paris were unknown. It is older than three thousand years. It was to this harbour that the Phoceans came after the Persian conquest of Ionia. They cast an iron bar into the sea and vowed that they would not return to Asia until that bar floated on the waves. They did not return. They made of the Vieux-Port an outpost of Greek civilisation among the western barbarians. They built temples, treasure houses and gymnasiums. They established minor colonies at Nicaea and Antipolis, at Nice and Antibes. The famous street which leads to the Vieux-Port from the heart of Marseilles is still called by its old Greek name. Surely Monsieur Creysse has heard of the Cannebière and respects the antiquity which that name enshrines? The old Phocæan colony, the area of the Vieux-Port, survived even its destruction by Julius Caesar, who was enraged because the Marseillais took the side of Pompey. It remained a centre of Greek culture when the rest of Gallia Narbonensis was plunged in barbarism. It was to Marseilles thereafter that the young Agricola, father-in-law of Tacitus, came to learn the Greek language. He did not go to Athens, he went to the schools and the gymnasium of the Vieux-Port, still known in Roman days by the lovely name of Alycidon. And now, in the hour of shame, Monsieur Creysse of Radio-Paris and the Croix de Feu speaks lightly of Alycidon as 'cette région de la ville.'

At such moments, when the noble past is mired by the ignoble present, the imagination is stirred to angered astonishment. The Germans, I am glad to say, did not find it easy to evacuate Alycidon. They were obliged to bring up artillery before the men would move. The women, screaming loudly, were dragged from their houses by the Gestapo, dragged one by one from the water front and along the Cannebière. '*Massili,*' if I may misquote the oldest of Roman poets, '*portabant juvenes de litore tanas.*' Did no word of Ennius' prophecy, echo in the ears of Monsieur Creysse? Such ears are blind.

33. THE DEBATE ON BEVERIDGE*

NOW THAT the sediment stirred up by the debate upon the Beveridge Report has to some extent subsided, it is possible to examine the shape and colour of the misunderstanding which arose. The House of Commons, as might surely have been foreseen, approached the discussion in a mood, not of deliberative calm, but of political disquiet. The atmosphere from the very start was sultry with accumulated thunderclouds. Many causes combined to create this sultriness. Man is by nature a political animal, and although while danger is immediate and acute he can tolerate the suspension of politics, yet when pressure is relaxed his nature tends to reassert itself in varied forms of restlessness. This inevitable exasperation was increased last week by more specific causes. Only a few days before Conservatives had, in the opinion of their adversaries, challenged the party truce by their rebellion against the Catering Bill. The Beveridge Report, moreover, had received unexampled publicity both at home and abroad. It was inevitable that the debate would be exploited, to quote Mr. Barnes, 'as an acid test of how Parliament would approach the bigger problems of reconstruction.' Nor was this all. The Report was obviously something more important than any plan for the simplification and enlargement of our social services; it was a statement of wide Socialist principles; it implied the redistribution of wealth, and as such it was bound to arouse prejudice on a plane different from the accustomed level of Parliamentary deliberation. It should have been foreseen by those who were responsible for the handling of the debate that doubt regarding the Government's intentions was both wide and deep. They should have been careful from the outset to remove these apprehensions. They were not careful.

The first mistake was to put into the mouth of Mr. Arthur Greenwood a motion which was unrepresentative of opinion

*February 26, 1943.

in the Labour Party, and which by its very evasiveness suggested from the outset that some attempt would be made to minimise the scope, immediacy and authority of the Beveridge Report. Had this Report been intended as not more than a 'comprehensive review' of our existing social provisions and as a 'valuable aid' in determining future legislation, then why had the whole world been allowed to suppose that it was an affirmation of our early intention to build a more equal social order? Mr. Erskine Hill might be right in warning us against 'conversion by headlines,' but, if that were so, why had the headlines been printed and circulated in such enormous type? The impression was at the very start created that Mr. Greenwood's truly admirable loyalty to his former colleagues in the Government had by some means been abused. And what Mr. Greenwood had hoped would prove a useful peg on which to hang the debate proved in fact an apple of discord which shook the loyalty and discipline of the Labour Party and which substituted conflict for co-operation. The second mistake was the choice of Sir John Anderson as the first of the three Government spokesmen. Suspicion, when once aroused, can only be allayed by the most unqualified assurances and by the utmost simplicity of phrase. Sir John Anderson is a man for whom I have the deepest esteem; his mind is muscular, his memory prodigious, his courage heroic and his integrity unsurpassed; yet Nature, who lavished so many of her gifts upon him, did not grant him the gift of simplification. He speaks with the precision of a pianola, giving exactly the same emphasis to qualifications as he does to assurances, exactly the same stress to 'no' as to 'yes'; he is so honestly anxious to avoid misunderstandings that he is almost invariably misunderstood. He was quite right, for instance, to point out that the whole Beveridge plan was based upon the assumption that unemployment would not exceed a certain figure, and that it was impossible at present to forecast whether this assumption was justified. But he became so involved in phrases such as 'a prior demonstration of its validity' that even Dr. Burgin failed to gather what he meant.

The confusion aroused in the minds of Members by Sir John Anderson's meticulous precision was not in the least diminished on the next day by the gyrations of Sir Kingsley Wood's 'sympathy and hope.' The Government, as we learnt from Mr. Herbert Morrison on the last day of the debate, were in fact resolved to accept and put into legislative form some 70 per cent. of the Beveridge plan. Yet Sir Kingsley, owing to long habits of caution, owing to his unhappy passion for the double negative, assured us blandly 'that they were doing nothing to retard these proposals.' Seldom in any gladiatorial combat has a protagonist shown such unnecessary hesitation. Instead of using his trident he sought, for no apparent reason, to involve his antagonist in a net; he lifted his shield instead of hurling his javelins; and the rapid movements of his legs raised a heavy cloud of dust. And there, crouching under the gallery, sat Sir William Beveridge himself, brooding like the Witch of Endor. And what (had Sir Kingsley been able to commune with him) would the witch have said? The answer would have been no less discomfiting than that delivered to Saul on the eve of the battle of Gilboa. 'Moreover,' Sir William, with his accustomed charm, would have replied, 'the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines.' And even Mr. Morrison, with his superb mastery of the occasion, proved unable to deliver Sir Kingsley out.

The final vote was received, not with jubilation, but with gloom. Each side felt that, owing to inadvertence, the House of Commons had been placed in a false position. Most of those who voted for the Government were indignantly conscious that their vote would be represented as hostility to the Beveridge Report. Many of those who voted against the Government resented the fact that their vote might be interpreted as lack of confidence in the present coalition. All were conscious that, although the difference of opinion was more apparent than real, yet it would assume in the eyes of the public and of foreign observers the proportions of a major conflict and would thereafter be magnified and exploited. All were con-

scious that a greater degree of frankness on all sides, a more prudent handling of the Parliamentary machine, a more intelligent tactical conception, might have prevented a collision which was desired only by the extremists on either side. All were deeply disappointed that so great an opportunity had been bungled, and that the community of purpose to which, during the years of danger, the House has given so sturdy an expression, should, owing to misadventure, have been dislocated almost beyond repair. And all were enraged that a scheme which will require for its execution the united energies and unselfishness of the whole community had, by an error in shunting, been switched from a national cause into a party controversy. It may well be that the immediate political differences will give way to persuasion and that an internal crisis in the Labour Party can be avoided. It may even be that the fissure which was opened in the cement of the coalition may be adequately repaired and the surface plastered. But the fact remains that owing to carelessness a tremendous opportunity for unification has been missed.

I do not wish to seem pessimistic. The Beveridge Report is, after all, a great State document, and to more than two-thirds of its recommendations the Government are now irrevocably pledged. The Labour Party have shown their determination, and they know that (whatever may have been the voting figures) they can count on the sympathy of many progressive members on the other side. The public should have learnt by now that the Beveridge Report is not some magic incantation but a suggested course of treatment, involving much sacrifice, subject to many unforeseeable difficulties, and practicable only under certain conditions. And it may well turn out that the same errors of presentation and management will not be repeated next time, and that when it comes to legislation the House may recover the unity of purpose of which it was temporarily deprived.

34. THE DEATH OF SPEAKER FITZROY*

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS on Tuesday was able—without violating tradition, good feeling or common sense—to solve a constitutional problem of some complexity. The death of the Speaker while in office created a situation for which there was no exact or helpful parallel. The Cromwellian precedents were inapplicable and obscure; the precedent of Charles Wolfran Cornwall was inauspicious. Speaker Cornwall died on January 2nd, 1789, and his successor was elected three days later. The Royal Assent could not on that occasion be obtained, since George III was segregated at Kew, unable to deal with public affairs; the obvious candidate, Michael Angelo Taylor, had become a controversial figure; and when, as an improvisation, Pitt proposed his own cousin, young William Grenville (at the time under thirty years of age), his election was opposed by 144 votes against 215, and he retained the Chair for a short and unfavourable period of only five months. The late Speaker, Captain Fitzroy, is said to have suggested to the Government in the first months of the war that a Bill should be prepared empowering the Chairman of Ways and Means to preside over the House pending the formal election of a new Speaker. This Bill was never laid on the table. The result was that on Wednesday of last week the House of Commons suddenly found itself unable to function constitutionally and was obliged to adjourn. The intervening days were devoted to discussion between the three main parties, and on Tuesday the election of Colonel Clifton Brown was proposed and carried with unanimous approval. The pulse of parliamentary life now beats again with its accustomed rhythm; and the solemnity of the occasion has not been marred by any hurried innovation.

I have heard it said that for the House in war-time to suspend urgent business in deference to historical formulas

*March 12, 1943.

was to display a lack of realism. Such criticism shows ignorance of the part played by the Chair in the correct conduct of the parliamentary system. The Speaker of the House of Commons is no mere chairman elected for the convenient supervision of debate; he is the champion of the Legislature against the Executive; he is the custodian of rights and liberties acquired in a long history; he is one of the main pillars of our constitution. Occasions have arisen in the past, and may well arise again, when it is the responsibility of the Speaker to defend in his own person the principles of parliamentary government. It is necessary and fitting that this high office should be endowed with a solemnity different in quality and scope from that accruing to a chairman of debate. It is right that the election of a new Speaker should be carried out with the considered approval of all parties and should not be treated as a matter of day-to-day convenience or improvisation. And it is important that the death of a Speaker should be viewed as an interruption in continuity and that the ordinary business of the House should be suspended in deference to the solemn constitutional function which he fulfils. Even were this general principle invalid, the present House of Commons would have wished to mark by some formal act of respect their sense of personal and corporate loss in the death of Captain Fitzroy. The tributes paid to him were in no sense formal tributes. He has presided over the House of Commons during fifteen years of fierce party controversy, of revolutionary internal change, of grave external danger; and his imperturbable dignity has been to the House a constant reminder that behind the alarums of the moment stretch seven centuries of history.

Only gradually did the office of Speaker become a post of constitutional responsibility; in the past it was often one of personal ambition and personal danger. Since the days when Sir William Hungerford, who presided over the 'Bad Parliament' of 1376-1377, was first recognised as having '*les paroles pour les communes d'Engleterre*,' since the days when Chaucer's son became the 'Commons parlour'; seven Speakers have

been beheaded, one killed in battle and one expelled for taking bribes. The impartiality of the Chair (which today is taken as an axiom) was not openly defined till the eighteenth century, when Arthur Onslow, who ruled the House of Commons for thirty-three years, laid it down that the primary duty of a Speaker was 'to be impartial in everything and to show respect to everybody.' Even in the nineteenth century Manners Sutton was accused of abusing his high office in the interests of his own party. The integrity of the Speaker, his immunity from all material ambitions, was even more slowly established as a guiding principle. Audley, Rich and Wingfield amassed huge fortunes while occupying the Chair, and only in the eighteenth century did the custom become recognised that the Speaker could not draw a salary from any other office or sinecure of State. The dignity of the Chair was not always either exercised or respected. When Sir John Eliot, against the Speaker's ruling, insisted upon raising the question of poundage and tonnage, his supporters seized upon the Speaker's person and forcibly prevented him from rising in the Chair. Speaker Rich, on that occasion, burst into tears and sat there blubbing while Sir John Eliot made his speech. Nor in earlier days was it universally accepted that one of the most important of a Speaker's qualifications was an intimate knowledge of the rules of Parliament. 'The House,' wrote Speaker Denison, 'is always kind and indulgent. But if the Speaker should be found often tripping his authority would soon be at an end.' For in fact no Speaker can depend too often or too obviously upon the tactful promptings of the Clerks.

In the long line of 138 successive Speakers certain names stand out—Arthur Onslow, Shaw Lefevre (whom Lord John Russell defined as the ideal holder of the Chair), Brand, Peel and Lowther. The prominence given by popular legend to Speaker Lenthall is not deserved. It is true that on January 3rd, 1642, he was inspired to a resounding phrase when ousted from his Chair by Charles I. The phrase, which the Clerk Rushworth took down in shorthand, is in fact most memor-

able: 'May it please Your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place but as the House please to direct me.' Yet in fact William Lenthall was not an admirable man. He was weak, hesitant and unpunctual; his authority over the Long Parliament was ineffective; he relied too much upon the advice whispered to him by the Clerk at the Table, Henry Elsynge; he made no protest against Pride's Purge; and, after all, he twice allowed himself to be pulled out of his Chair, once by Charles I and once by Cromwell's soldiers. Yet the main charge against William Lenthall is one of avarice. He secured many sinecures and accumulated so large a fortune that he was able to buy Goring House on the present site of Buckingham Palace. And it was rumoured even that he had looted many of the King's pictures from Whitehall.

Sir Christopher Yelverton, in making the conventional disclaimer when elected to the Chair in 1597, defined the qualities necessary to a Speaker as follows: 'Your Speaker ought to be a big man and comely, stately and well spoken, his voice great, his carriage majestical, his nature haughty and his purse plentiful.' Captain Fitzroy possessed many of these qualifications. In addition, he was just, authoritative, resourceful, humorous, patient and tactful beyond compare. His influence was founded, not upon the legalistic interpretation of precedents, not upon any intellectual subtleties, but on the fact that he was regarded as the custodian of the common sense of the House. Mr. David Grenfell was apt in referring to 'a manner and demeanour we shall always remember.' For in fact the figure of Captain Fitzroy will for ever be associated in our minds with the tremendous dramas of the present Parliament. Aloof and stately, majestic and unperturbed, he sat there as the symbol of continuity; and when the House of Commons was reduced to dust and ashes he was able by his simple grandeur to maintain, without one instant's incongruity, the 'well-ordered inheritance' of seven hundred years.

35. HOMER AS A POET OF NATURE*

IT IS a comforting thing, in war-time, to read again those books which were familiar to one thirty years ago, especially those books which deal with the struggles and anxieties of another age. The immense popularity acquired in recent years by Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is evidence that the frayed and fretted mind of today does in fact derive solace from the contemplation of similar confusion, similar apprehensions and similar impatience in the past. I have this week been reading again with great enjoyment the *Iliad* of Homer. It is the fashion today to deride our former school curriculum and to contend that the many hours spent in boyhood construing Greek texts or, with the help of a Gradus, turning out execrable hexameters, were wholly wasted hours,—hours that could have been better spent in the study of Norwegian or Czech. I do not share this view. I believe that the intricate accuracy of the classical languages does provide a mental training which is not offered to a comparable degree by any modern tongue. I agree with Alain that the muscles of the adolescent mind are tautened, and at the same time rendered more flexible, by what he calls '*la difficulté vaincue*,' and that the Greek and Latin languages do in fact offer the best of all gymnastics. But the days of liberal education are now leaving us, and for men who are not scholars to profess an interest in classical literature will shortly, I suppose, be regarded as a proof of intellectual snobbishness. I am sorry about this, since there must be many men of my generation who, while totally unable to construe a chorus of Aeschylus, do none the less retain sufficient memory of the Greek language to read their Leaf or Loeb with heightened appreciation. And for them the Greek language, even when aided by the crib, will always have about it a quality of light and outline such as is not provided by the clouded vocabularies of Nordic tongues.

It is curious, moreover, to observe how, in reading again

* March 19, 1943.

the whole of the *Iliad* after thirty years, the qualities which struck one as a boy as so magnificent appear artificial or merely repetitive, whereas certain aspects of the epic which as a boy one scarcely noted stand out like immense promontories striding into the sea. As a boy I was entranced by the actual pugnacity of the heroes of the *Iliad*, by the speed and ferocity with which they hurled their darts and spears. Re-reading the poem with a less excitable mind I am struck, not so much by the lethal power of the heroes, as by the facility with which their opponents died. It is credible, for instance, that a man who received a spear in his heart or lungs should immediately collapse while his armour clangs around him. Yet the heroes of Homer die quite suddenly from a blow in the mouth. I had forgotten also how large a part is played in Homer by the use of stones. Again and again do we find some Greek or Trojan taking a stone from the ground and hurling it at his assailant with such force that it crushes the helmet and the breastplate and breaks the ribs. The Troad, I am well prepared to believe, was rich in stones. Yet the part played by these missiles in the armoury of the opposing forces is one which exceeds the bounds of credibility. As a boy, moreover, I had not realised the consummate meanness of the Gods. It seems strange to me today that we,—who were brought up upon principles of chastity, honesty and fair conduct—should not have been more shocked than we were by the really atrocious behaviour of the Olympians. At every point did these Gods and Goddesses violate the code of continence and honour which we were being taught. And yet, so slightly developed is the sense of comparison among the young, it never struck me at the time that the iniquitous actions of the Olympians should be regarded with disapproval rather than with delight.

The atmosphere of the *Iliad*, as I remembered it, was one of extreme natural beauty. I retained in my mind the stock quotation regarding 'a light that never was on sea or land'; it had seemed to me that the climate of the *Iliad* was in fact one of eternal summer. This impression remained with me even

after I had visited the area and learnt from bitter experience how cold is the wind which blows across the Thracian downs, the wind which in Istanbul today is still known by the name of 'Boreas.' I have known also the white mist which comes with the south wind, the wind they still call 'Notos,' when the sky loses all colour and becomes a tent of opal white. I retained the impression also that in contrast to the dust and turmoil of battle, in contrast to the clash and fury of those three miles between the ships and the Skaian Gate, Homer had pictured a windless outer world, in which not a leaf stirred upon the poplar and in which at night-time the stars shone clear in the deep ether. Yet in fact Homer refers but rarely to the amenities of nature; his similes are drawn almost exclusively from storm and rain and hail and fog. Troy itself is always described as 'windswept' and, while Homer is acutely sensitive to the direction of the wind, while he notes always whether it blows from east or west or north or south, these winds are seldom temperate; they blow across the battlefield with the shriek of a gale. Nor in the *Iliad* is there any mention of sunshine; the sun rises with its accompanying epithets and sinks again 'at the time of the loosening of the oxen,' but Homer takes not note of its brightness; he might be describing Oban and not the Isles of Greece.

On re-reading the *Iliad* as a whole and carefully, I am at a loss to find from what my impression of great natural beauty was derived. It is true that in his description of sea and sand, in his sudden evocations of great distances when the stars shine over the promontories, Homer does reflect the amazing beauty of the Aegean. Yet his references to natural objects are sparse and cold. Only twice in the whole poem does he mention flowers. There is a passage about the poppy drooping its head aside 'being heavy with fruit and the showers of spring'; and there is the description of the improvised bed of Zeus upon the summit of Gargaros which was made of 'new grass and dewy lotus, and crocus, and hyacinth, thick and soft.' These are the only flowers mentioned in the *Iliad*, nor do trees fare much better. We have the famous oak-tree and the

equally famous fig-tree which served as landmarks of battle outside the walls of Troy. He mentions elms, and ash, and pine, and olive, and poplar, 'and the smooth-barked cornel tree,' which I presume is what we now call dogwood. But the plane-tree, which today forms so lovely a feature in the Greek and Turkish landscape, is not mentioned in the *Iliad*. Homer's trees were frail and small. And round them, even in the blaze of noon, stretch 'the grey sea and the sheer cliffs.' And from distant Ida flashes continual lightning and the rumble of thunder echoes through the Straits.

The impression of warmth and sunshine, which, in spite of its fog-laden climate, the *Iliad* still leaves upon us, is perhaps due to effects other than any direct description of natural beauties. Each Homeric word is sunlit, and the very names that slide so lightly through his lines (Thaleia, Nesaia, Kymothoë and ox-eyed Halië) bring sunshine in their wake. We assume that all these happenings are taking place in arid sunlight, and when Homer slides into one of his descriptions of deft physical actions we see the thighs and fingers of his heroes throwing sharp shadows on the sand. In place of the beauties of nature we have the physical beauty of the Gods and Goddesses, the handmaidens and the heroes, who fill his stage. We have 'a generation of men half divine'; we have 'the head and beautiful face of a man divine, even of Achilles.' Homer had little sense of colour; his ships were not, as Flecker supposed, 'coloured the deep-sea blue and shore-sea green'; they were black. The delicate colouring of rose and saffron which tinges his sunrises and his sunsets is not often reflected in the objects which he so minutely describes. He tells us only of 'a black ship on a great sea.' It is our imagination which sees the ship as iridescent and the sea eternally purple, whereas, on so many occasions, he describes it as either grey or green. Even so does our imagination line the Medjerda valley with almond trees, and picture a sheet of tulip under the olive trees of Sfax.

36. NO RUZ*

I WAS reminded last Sunday that we had reached the feast of the vernal equinox, that happy festival which the Persians call *No Ruz*. I sympathise with those who contend that a fixed Easter might give a pagan flavour to the solemn ceremonies of the Christian Church, and might suggest irrelevant associations with Attis and Adonis, with Tammuz, Osiris and the rest. I agree also that in this island we do not pass, as they pass in other climates, in a sudden bound from winter into spring. January will find the snowdrops nodding above the frost-bound loam; in February will come the first crocus, the homely cottage *ribes*, and the bravest of all, the little irises, the pale *stylosa*, the dark *reticulata*. We know that even when March 21st has arrived, even when the almond and plum rise pink against the clouds, there will be many weeks of wind and cold, and that the daffodils will dance with withered heads before the garden wakes to a new year or the hedge-rows turn from brown to green. I know all this; yet I regret that we have no anniversary in this country, no fixed day of jubilation (unless it be the date decreed by Mr. Morrison for double summer-time) on which to congratulate each other on the passing of winter. It is not so in other countries. In Russia, when the thaw sets in, when the great scabs of ice begin to shuffle under the bridges of the Neva, when the statues in the Summer Garden emerge from the sentry-boxes in which they have spent the winter, only a few short days of fog and slush intervene before December becomes June. The trees which on Monday showed naked against the vanishing snow become by Saturday a sheet of tender green. And in the Persian highlands it seems that March 21st is in fact the day appointed for renewal, for on that morning the dun-coloured lion-limbed Elburz are threaded through all their valleys with streamers of cherry, apricot and plum.

To March 21st, to this day of sudden hope and beauty, the

* March 26, 1943.

Persians give the name of 'New Year.' According to their legends the festival of *No Ruz* was instituted by Jamshid, son of Tahumarth, who, according to the *Shahnama*, reigned for seven hundred years. Every British schoolgirl knows that Jamshid gloried and drank deep, but she is unaware that he also possessed dominion over birds, fishes, demons and fairies. Nor is she alive to the fact that to him is due the lovely spring festival of Iran. On the night of March 20th, in the little rooms of Shiraz or Isfahan, there are sounds of busy preparation. On the following morning, when the sun first rises above the mountains and strikes the domes and towers, the petroleum-tins, in which all winter the bulbs of tulip and hyacinth have been stored in darkness, are brought out into the living-room. The family, arrayed for the occasion in new clothes, embrace each other with affection. Upon the table is set a saucer containing grains of wheat. Presents are exchanged and neighbours visited. And when the noonday sun warms the dry uplands, the people flow out of the city gates and sit in rows beside the streams, 'rejoicing in the hour of Spring when the plane tree whispers to the elm.' In his tremendous work upon the *Modern Literature of Persia*, Professor E. G. Browne quotes a passage from Qu'ani which well describes the *No Ruz* festival:

'All the people put on new clothes on this great feast, distribute sugar plums among their friends, fill their hands with silver and corn, eat pistachio nuts and almonds, burn aloe wood and other fragrant substances, and greet one another with kisses.'

For those Persians who wish to celebrate their *No Ruz* with traditional ceremony it is obligatory to collect and place upon the table seven objects, the names of which, in the Persian language, begin with the initial 's.' These are *sunbul*, *sib*, *susan*, *sim*, *sir*, *sirka* and *sipand*, namely, hyacinth, apple, lily, silver, garlic, vinegar and rue. I have never seen this curious assortment actually collected on any Persian table, and in fact I doubt whether, except in Gilan or Mazanderan, it would be possible to find a lily in the month of March.

Although the scarlet tulip, and at rare moments the lady tulip, can be discovered in the hills, there are few flowers in March throughout the stony wilderness which surrounds Tehran. Only sometimes, and for an hour or so, one can detect among the stones and the camel thorn, the stunted, glaucous shape of the *iris persica*—colourless, scentless, frail. Yet in spite of this the festival of *No Ruz* is not one which any Persian will allow a foreigner to forget. One's servant will place the saucer upon the breakfast-table containing the grains of wheat; and he may well murmur, as Robert Byron's servant murmured, '*No Ruz*, English Kissmass.' The day must be spent in paying visits to high functionaries, exchanging compliments and cups of tea, leaving cards. And it was on that day that the Shah himself, arrayed in all the jewels of the King of Kings, would hold a great salaam in his palace of Gulistan.

In the compound which encloses that palace there are many different buildings, some of which are stained and tattered and others of which have been fresh washed in blue or pink. Among them is the high loggia which opens upon a pool and fountain and which contains the 'Throne of Marble,' supported upon alabaster lions. A vast awning, striped in brown and white, is looped over the façade of this loggia in such a manner as to throw the recesses of the building into deep shadow while allowing a sudden blaze of sunshine to fall upon the throne itself. The Court functionaries, the Ministers, the Provincial Governors arrayed in their robes of honour, with their arms crossed deferentially in front of them, are grouped in the garden to the right of the pool; the diplomatists and foreign advisers are grouped on the left. A trumpet blares; a hush descends upon the company; the generals and officers spring to the salute. And suddenly from the inner darkness of the loggia the Shah strides slowly into the sunshine and sits upon the throne. In his képi is fixed a huge osprey plume dangling with small gems and clasped by the great Moghul diamond, the Darya-i-Nur or Sea of Light. In double rows down the front of his tunic are sewn the six

great diamonds in which Nasr-ed-Din Shah so delighted, and the buckle of his military belt is formed by a gigantic emerald. The Shah (for in my time it was Reza Shah Pahlevi, now living in enraged exile) sits there enormous, saturnine, fierce. The Court poet advances and in a high tremolo intones a song of eulogy; the fountain splashes; the diplomatists fidget uneasily in their tight uniforms; the Persian officials cast submissive eyes upon the ground. The poem drones to its unending close; the Shah rises suddenly, each one of his diamonds flashing in the sun; he salutes briskly and is once again lost in the dark shadow behind the throne. With a murmur of felicitation the two groups of foreigners and Persians fuse together. The fountain tinkles on.

At Maidenhead the other day there died Prince Hassan Qajar, the last of the Qajar dynasty to sit upon the Marble or the Peacock Throne. Had fate been less unkind, Prince Hassan might well have proved the most loved and enlightened of the Qajar Shahs. His brother, Ahmed Shah, retired to Paris at a moment when the effects of the last war had plunged Persia into an external and internal situation of almost inextricable confusion. Prince Hassan, as Valiahd and Regent, exercised his responsibilities with integrity and skill. Yet Reza Khan, the forceful soldier, had already decided to found a dynasty of his own, and the November morning came when the Regent was packed into a limousine and sent to exile in the West. He bore that exile and the rigours of our climate with gay and modest dignity. He was a good Moslem and a person of taste and culture; although not a man of action, although possessing a temperamental hatred of politics, he never repudiated the inheritance or the responsibilities that were his. It would please him, when he came to London, to meet those English friends who shared his love and homesickness for Persia; he would recite for them passages from the *Shahnama* or the verses of Hafiz. On this feast of *No Ruz*, I pay a tribute to his gentle memory.

37. EVACUATION DISCLOSURES*

THE BRITISH people possess a capacity for ignoring the disagreeable such as is not found in any other country. We have a way of hiding at the bottom of drawers, or pushing to the back of cupboards, anything which appears to us either discreditable or inconvenient. Anyone who disinters these objects is regarded as guilty of crankiness, lack of patriotism or bad taste. In no area of public administration have these methods of concealment been more ardently pursued than in the area of child welfare. The squalid facts about the children of the poorest families (who are described in an oily phrase as 'belonging to the lowest income groups') were pushed to the very recesses of our cupboard and hidden under sun-bonnets and spotless linen aprons. It has always been like this. Our grandfathers consoled themselves with thoughts of Sunday-schools, Lord Shaftesbury and Little Nell. Our fathers consoled themselves by slum visiting, and by the happy thought that in our free, but ordered, community Sir Thomas Lipton, although by origin an errand-boy like any other, could by dint of thrift and zeal and honesty entertain kings and emperors upon his yacht. And in my own generation we were apt to avert our eyes from slum conditions and to solace ourselves with the thought that with the improvement of our social services, the increase in housing estates and day nurseries, the intelligence and devotion manifested by social workers and the teaching profession, such conditions were but isolated relics of a rapidly disappearing past. And then came September, 1939. The cupboards were opened and the drawers were emptied of their contents. The evacuees poured into the reception areas. And within a week the British people realised that a large section of our civilised community was not civilised in the very least.

This was indeed a salutary lesson and one which we should not mitigate or forget. I therefore welcome the publication of

*April 16, 1943.

a book entitled, *Our Towns: Close-up*, which provides us in readable form with reliable information regarding the facts and conditions disclosed by the evacuation of 1939. The author of this book wishes to remain anonymous, but it has been composed with the assistance of the Hygiene Committee of the Women's Group on Public Welfare and the preface is written by Miss Margaret Bondfield, their chairman. It was felt by these experienced women that the true conditions of slum life have too often been concealed from the public, partly owing to reluctance to disclose discreditable facts and partly owing to an exaggerated regard for the susceptibilities of the local authorities. The evacuation of 1939 provided 'a window through which English town life was suddenly and vividly seen from a new angle.' It was felt, therefore, that it would be useful to collect all available evidence regarding the accusations levelled by the reception areas against the evacuees; to consider how far those accusations were justified and how far the faults complained of were ascribable to urban conditions; and, finally, to make suggestions as to the means whereby these conditions could be improved. The evidence forms in the aggregate a formidable indictment, not only of urban conditions, but of the measures which the country as a whole has taken to remedy these conditions. It is a challenge to the public conscience, nor should we hesitate from motives of delicacy or caution to emphasise that challenge. When the matter was raised in the House of Commons the absurd suggestion was made that to disclose these facts implied a desire 'to insult the working classes.' It is not a class, or a section of a class, which is to blame, but the community as a whole. The author of this work is to be congratulated on her lack of reticence.

The most prominent accusation made against the evacuees by their hosts in the reception areas was that of personal uncleanliness. This accusation, to a really horrible extent, was justified. No less than 65,292 of the children evacuated from London were found to be in verminous condition. A similar discovery was made in regard to 20·8 per cent, of those evacu-

ated from Liverpool; 19·8 per cent. of those evacuated from Middlesbrough and 17·3 per cent. of those evacuated from Manchester. Certain other discoveries were made. It was found that even when evacuees had been deloused in the country they again became infested after a visit from their parents. It was found that the highest degree of infestation was found among children of pre-school age. It was found that although 40 per cent. of boys under three years of age were verminous, very few of the older boys or young adult males were infested. Conversely, in girls there was practically no decrease before the age of 13, and many girls over that age were found to be verminous. The suggestion is made that the older girls refrain from combing their hair for fear of disturbing the permanent wave. Dr. Kenneth Mellanby, for instance, in his study of *The Incidence of Head Lice in England*, reports that even little girls under ten years of age are given permanent waves and dissuaded by their parents thereafter from combing their hair. The incidence of skin disease such as scabies, impetigo and ringworm is also analysed. In Sheffield, for instance, there were 14,500 cases of skin diseases in a school population of 55,000, and in Birmingham nearly 11,000 in a school population of 118,000. Nor were these the only complaints. The hosts in the reception areas were astounded by the insanitary habits of their guests. Bed-wetting may well be excused as due to psychological causes, such as home-sickness and loss of confidence, but there are other habits recorded in this analysis which throw a harsh light upon the home life of our urban population.

Apart from this major accusation of uncleanness, there are other facts disclosed in this book which indicate that parents in the poorer classes are ignorant of the simplest principles of child welfare. It was found, for instance, that many people were totally indifferent to the importance of sleep. No habits of regular bed-time had been inculcated into the urban children, who were allowed to go to bed whenever they chose. Many parents appeared totally unaware of the basic principles of nutrition, and would spend money on

sweets or comics which would have been far better devoted to the provision of food. It was found that many of the evacuated children had never sat down to a meal and did not know the use of forks or spoons. Their diet seems to have consisted almost exclusively of fish and chips, pickles, ice-cream and sweets; many of the children had never seen their mothers cook and had never had a hot meal at home. Vegetables to them were unknown and therefore distasteful. They regarded the country diet with suspicion and alarm. The remedies for these defects are obvious. They include housing, sanitation, water-supply, more day-nurseries, more British Restaurants, more hot meals in schools, better school premises in urban areas and, above all, education for parents in the elements of child welfare. The task is immense, but the disgrace is great. Bad conditions will not be remedied if we pretend that they are incidental, inevitable, or non-existent.

The evacuation of September, 1939, was not only a terrible disclosure, it was also a great opportunity. Many evils have been disclosed, but much permanent good has been done. I know of one house in Kent which since the war has been turned over to the Save the Children Fund, and in which some fifty little children from London have been cared for and trained. In September, 1939, they were indeed a squalid little bundle of human miseries; it is a delight to see them today, clean and rubicund, banging their spoons on their porridge bowls, tumbling like puppies on the grass. Nor has every host in the reception areas found his guests intractable or uncivilised. Even the parents, sometimes, have shown understanding and something approaching appreciation. And, above all, this great disclosure has profoundly affected the public conscience. It has taught local authorities that conditions in the areas under their control are not always as admirable as they seem in the reports, and it has taught the citizens of this country that we cannot claim to be a civilised community so long as such conditions are allowed to persist.

38. TUNISIA AND THE CLASSICS*

WHEN THE stern strokes of Big Ben hush their vibrations on the still air, we listen in anxious excitement to the calm voice of the announcer as he tells us of the battle of our two great armies and of their French and American allies. Tunisian names float across the ether—names which have only become known to us during the last six months or names which evoke faint tourist memories of the hotels which were illustrated on the posters and in the folders of the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*. Yet we are aware also that this gigantic battle is now reaching historic ground, that our tanks already churn meadows once stamped upon by the elephants of Juba or Hasdrubal, and that the sappers auscultate for mines along roads once traversed by the legions of Belisarius and Caesar. Already perhaps some corporal in a county regiment has seen the distant stain in the hot air, a stain of green and white, which marks the gardens and palaces of what to the ancients was known as 'shining Tunis'; and already from the hill of Keftouro the French have seen the sun glint on the wide lagoon which marks the site of Hippo Zarytus, or Bizerta. Already our men have passed the battlefield of Thapsus, where Caesar dealt his final blow to the Republicans between the marshes and the sea. As I write these words the Eighth Army may already be in Hamamet, or Neapolis. Already the two great promontories of Hermes and Apollo have shimmered through the haze; already our Spitfires have swooped round the cliff where Dido bewailed Aeneas and where the great citadel of Carthage rose above the gulf. Three times in history have those few square miles witnessed the destruction of great armies; and on this fourth occasion it may be given to us, between the mountains and the sea, to win one of the world's resounding victories.

I am always fascinated by those fragile filaments which spread like some weed beneath the soil of history, emerging

*May 7, 1943.

suddenly at unexpected points. It amuses me, for instance, to consider that that most familiar of all ingredients, *sauce mayonnaise*, can trace its name back to a Phoenician origin, since the man who invented (or is supposed to have invented) that condiment was cook to the Commandant of Port Mahon or Portus Magonis, the eponym of which was Mago the Carthaginian, son of Hanno, who annexed the Balearic Isles. It may well be that within a few weeks the men of the First Army will stand upon the Byrsa of Carthage or stroll through the museum which Père Delattre assembled, gazing without interest at the Punic shards on which are stamped the disc of Baal-Ammon and the crescent of Tanit. Some of them will have heard of Hannibal and Hasdrubal, of Cato and Regulus; some of them will have heard of the Three Punic Wars, and will remember how Marius was also seen to sit among the Carthaginian ruins. Some even will have heard of Elissa, daughter of the King of Tyre, who as Dido displayed such marked incompetence as the hostess of Aeneas. And there will be some even (for our army contains every type) who will recall how Flaubert, in his sunny little house at Croisset, wrote a striking book about Carthage telling a long story of the mutiny of the mercenaries (the *bellum inexpiabile*) and the love of Matho for Salamambo, daughter of Hamilcar. They will recall his description of the great temples on the Acropolis, of the houses, painted black with bitumen, falling in terrace after terrace to the sea. They will recall the great purple awnings draped above the garden banquets, the peacocks nesting in the cedars, the chameleons creeping upon the cactus leaves, the great braziers steaming with Abyssinian gums. They will recall a Carthage opulent and sinister, vague and terrifying as its unnamed gods, and they will remember how the lions roared around the suburbs and the baboons gibbered through the colonnades.

The tanks, the armoured cars, the lorries, the scout-cars and the little jeeps will stream along the dusty road to Sukhara, and some there will be who know that this is Utica where Cato died. Here it was that Curio, the friend of Caesar,

was overwhelmed and killed by the Numidians, and here it was that the great Stoic was abandoned and committed suicide. There may be some even, fresh from the University, who will smile to remember that it was in Utica that the *Cato* of Addison was staged. I doubt whether, in fact, any man in our great armies has read the *Cato* of the ingenious Mr. Addison. It is indeed a desolate drama, rendered popular at the time by its implied criticism of the Duke of Marlborough, but only redeemed today by two most lovely lines:

‘Virtues which shun the day and lie concealed
In the smooth seasons and the calms of life.’

It may well happen that in the final stages of this huge campaign our men will rest at Sukhara or that the enemy may make some desperate stand upon the little escarpment which Caesar mentions, upon the site of the *Castra Cornelia*. A few, perhaps, a very few, will know and recognise these things. But even to others there may come some intimation that, having fought through Libya from the east, through Numidia from the west, they have jointly reached a tiny angle which is haunted by gigantic ghosts.

Even the little places have their tradition. The Mejerda valley, which for six months has become so familiar to the First Army, has many a classical association. Polybius calls the river the ‘Makaras,’ the name being derived from Mokar, the Tyrian Hercules. The Romans, by a familiar transposition, called it the ‘Bagradas,’ and it was the Arabs, as has often happened, who reverted to an approximation of its original Punic name. Caesar mentions it incidentally in referring to ‘The Camp by the Bagradas’—*in castra ad Bagradam*. Lucan, in describing the stockade established by Curio, calls it a sluggish stream. ‘Slowly,’ he writes, ‘the Bragadas pushes on and furrows the dry sand.’ But the strangest reference to the Bragadas or Mejerda is contained in the pages of the *Punica* of Silius Italicus. Nobody, I hope, reads the *Punica*. It is the longest of all Latin poems, and even Pliny, who had such affection for Silius Italicus, thought it painstaking but

dull. Silius was a rich and cultured man, who had travelled widely throughout the Empire, and whose main vestige of renown is due to his purchase of the site at Naples where Virgil was buried and his careful restoration and maintenance of the poet's tomb. In his old age he wrote his enormous and unreadable epic on the Punic Wars.

This poem he would insist on reciting aloud to his guests; even after eighteen hundred years some echo of their yawns comes down the centuries. But I was amused to find that he mentioned the Mejerda, and I turned up the Sixth Book of the *Punica* to see what he had said. In a paraphrase of Lucan's words (a paraphrase which I fear can scarcely have been accidental) he states that the Mejerda 'furrows the dry sands with sluggish foot' (*'Turbidus arentes lento pede sulcat harenas'*). And he adds that no river of Libya carries down so thick a deposit to the sea. It is, in fact, the case that the Mejerda, which used to reach the sea immediately to the south of Utica, has today changed its mouth, and that the silt which it has for centuries deposited has now filled up the little bay on which the city of Utica once stood. But the rest of Silius's story is dull indeed. He tells of the Naiads that haunt the Mejerda's pools. And he devotes 150 lines to the description of a Dragon who lived in a cave of the Mejerda Valley, feeding upon lions, and who was finally slain by Regulus. That is the fable of the river which runs under the bridge at Medjez-el-Bab and along the defile on which for six long months the First Army have gazed. They also, as their Roman predecessors, have given to the hills and valleys names drawn from the vernacular. They also have sometimes kept the local names, giving to them strange twists of pronunciation, remoulding Phoenician sounds. Nor did Silius, nursing his ill-health, churning out his endless hexameters in a villa which had once belonged to Cicero, awaiting with impatience the arrival of the patient Pliny, ever dream that the Barbarians of the north would one day give to the Mejerda a fame greater even than that which Regulus conferred.

39. THE FAME OF BYRON*

ON THIS day, May 14th, one hundred and nineteen years ago, the news reached London that Byron had died at Missolonghi. A messenger from Corfu had arrived the night before, bringing with him a packet of letters, addressed to Douglas Kinnaird, at Messrs. Ransome's. Among them was an envelope to be forwarded urgently to John Cam Hobhouse. That envelope and its contents are still preserved among the rich archives of John Murray in Albemarle Street. It is a blue official envelope, franked by Lord Sidney Osborne, who was then in the employment of the British High Commissioner in the Ionian Islands; it bears the official red seal of the Commission and added to it Lord Sidney's private seal in black wax. It contains several documents in different handwritings. There is an almost illegible scrawl written from the death-chamber by Pietro Gamba. There is a long and painstaking letter from Byron's servant, Fletcher. They had been written at Missolonghi on April 21st. There is also a dignified letter from Sidney Osborne stating the bald facts. In 'an agony of grief' Hobhouse read these letters in his rooms at the Albany. In a few hours the news of Byron's death had spread through London and beyond. Alfred Tennyson, then a lad of fourteen, heard the news at Somersby Rectory; he ran in dismay to a neighbouring quarry and scratched the words 'Byron is dead' upon the sandstone. Alexander Pushkin heard of it in exile in Southern Russia; he instructed the village priest to conduct a memorial service in honour of 'the great man Georgios'; the young Pushkin, his head bowed in grief for a man whom he had never known, paid honour to the hero of Missolonghi by this remote and lonely *panikhida*. The word spread in ever-widening circles through Europe and the world. In Germany, in America men told each other the dread news: it was as if some beacon had been suddenly dimmed.

* May 14, 1943.

It is difficult for us who live in an age of diffused and superficial emotions, to realise the quality of Byron's immense renown. I recall a story which Edmund Gosse once told me, and which I find it difficult to adjust to the proportions and probabilities of the world I know. Gosse had the story from Lord John Manners, and was prepared to vouch for the accuracy of every detail. In May, 1824, Lord John, at the time a child of six, was allowed as a treat to be present at a dinner given at the Castle to the gentlemen of the Belvoir Hunt. The dinner had reached the stage at which the port began to circulate and at which Lord John himself ought to have been taken up to bed. A letter was handed to the Duke of Rutland, who, having read it, called for order and rose in his place. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'grave news has just been brought to me. Lord Byron has died in Greece.' A sudden hush fell on all those sporting gentlemen and their expected conviviality was stilled. A low murmur of regret spread round the table, and thereafter several of the hunting squires started to recite their favourite passages from Byron's work. Lord John was allowed to remain and witness this decorous and unforeseen ceremony. The party dissolved with unaccustomed sobriety, and the little boy went back to bed. I have always been puzzled by this story, since it is inconceivable that the death of any poet, indeed the death of any private individual, could today cast a similar gloom over any assembly. Nor can one suppose that when the death of Tennyson or Kipling was announced there would be men who would either wish, or be able, to recite poetry at a hunt dinner. The quality of Byron's renown was clearly different from anything that we have known. What was that quality?

People of my generation know far too much about Byron. We know the nature of his relationship, both with Lady Oxford and with Mrs. Mule. He was never a reticent person, and in the last forty years we have had full opportunity to witness the pageant of his bleeding heart. He was a man who was so passionately interested in his own biography that, in spite of his nomadic existence, he preserved an inconceivable

number of relics from his own past. He was one of those egoistic men who try to keep every letter which they receive. Among the papers, for instance, which were found in his room at Missolonghi there is a note of very slight importance written to him by a French Levantine at Athens thirteen years before. It would be possible with this vast documentation to reconstruct a diary covering almost every day of Byron's adult life. The result has been that for the present generation Byron the man has completely overshadowed Byron the poet. We have become so fascinated by his character that we tend to forget not only his poetry but even his legend. Yet it was that legend which gave to the Pilgrim of Eternity a fame such as no other English poet has achieved during his own lifetime. Goethe, for instance, who had no illusions at all regarding Byron's intellectual capacity, assured Eckermann that 'a character of such eminence has never existed before and probably will never come again.' Lamartine, as we know, regarded Byron as the symbol of his age. And even Stendhal, who was not given to facile enthusiasms and who had been disconcerted by Byron when he met him in Milan, refers to his 'Apollonic quality.' How can so subtle a psychologist as Stendhal have discovered this Olympian radiance in a man whom we regard as a weak, humorous, touchy, unscrupulous but on the whole agreeable hedonist?

We can understand, of course, the 'Byron fever' which swept through London drawing-rooms of 1812. It was entrancing to discover that the 'man of loneliness and mystery' was, in fact, a young peer of really astonishing good looks who could be seen leaning aloof against a column in Melbourne House. We can understand how the apparent anarchism of Byron's earlier poems appealed to a generation which was bored by the eighteenth century and disillusioned by the reaction against it. We can understand how his excessive individualism delighted an age which was disgusted both by the old order and the new. We can understand how the British aristocracy (who had for so many years been deprived

of their accustomed solace of foreign travel) enjoyed the guide-book element in Byron's poetry, and how the romantic sensibilities of the time relished these strongly-coloured pictures of primitive, although contemporary, conditions. We can well understand why Byron became fashionable; what we do not understand is why his earlier poems made so lasting an appeal to men of deep intelligence and wide culture. It is not sufficient to attribute the whole Byronic legend to the *maladie du siècle*, or to rest content with Taine's dictum that 'no more illustrious prey was ever sacrificed to the century's disease.' Such explanations account for much, but they do not account for Goethe's admiration, for Stendhal's famous phrase, or for the fact that, a hundred Midland squires should have been hushed to awed silence in the dining-room at Belvoir. We find it difficult to recapture the state of mind, the serious receptiveness, of so diverse an audience.

The answer is, I think, that Byron's poetry appealed to the sophisticated and to the unsophisticated for different reasons. The latter enjoyed it partly because it was descriptive, and therefore easily recognisable, and partly because it was rhetorical, and therefore easily memorised. Moreover, they mistook Byron's vehemence for virility; in his poems their own physical energy became articulate. But what on earth was the quality of pleasure which Goethe derived? Not intellectual, assuredly. 'Once he starts thinking,' Goethe said to Eckermann, 'he becomes a child.' For Goethe and his fellow-intellectuals Byron was predominantly a symbol—Euphorion or Apollo—a figure of statuesque serenity shining through the mists of a disillusioned world. Was that conception wholly fantastic? Byron was a man of many attitudes, but his death at Missolonghi was not a pose. Nor need we wonder that this shining sacrifice should, on that morning of May 14th, 1824, have sent dark ripples of distress throughout the world.

40. CARTHAGINIAN VICTORY*

AMONG THE many devices by which the Axis propaganda machines have sought to distract attention from their African disaster has been an attempt to represent the British public as surrendering to hysterical and undignified jubilation. 'The English,' they write, 'have gone drunk with victory.' This is an untruth. Our people have accepted our Carthaginian triumph with calm thankfulness; their mood has been one of modesty, moderation and self-control. They have, of course, been astonished by the suddenness and magnitude of the German collapse; they have discovered with surprise and pleasure that we possess two first-class armies, and that the Sixth Armoured Division has proved itself a worthy rival of the famous Seventh. They are relieved that the prestige of the British private soldier, the brilliance of our leadership, have been enhanced and confirmed by this fine feat of war. But if anything they have under-estimated rather than over-estimated the consequences of the Tunisian campaign. Their prudent attitude is dictated mainly by a wise expectation that there are even harder struggles to come. They know that at any moment our Russian Allies may be exposed to a strain even more terrible than those which they have withstood in the past. And they know that when we come to assail the fortress of Europe we shall have to face many ordeals and many disappointments. Yet the fact remains that the British public, while realising the strategic implications of this Punic war, have not fully grasped its immense political significance. They under-estimate the effect which it will have on public opinion in Germany, in Italy and in occupied Europe.

It has been a delight to me to watch during these historic weeks the really remarkable incompetence with which Doctor Goebbels has handled his home front. Up to the very last second the German public were left under the impression that by superior strategic ability von Arnim has manoeuvred

*May 21, 1943.

Alexander into a position of great difficulty. They were assured that, owing to the elasticity of the German defence, the American and British forces would be exposed to an unfavourable strategic position and faced with the formidable quadrilateral of Bizerta, Tunis, Zaghouan and Hammamet. The folly of Dr. Goebbels' method can be illustrated by quotation. On the day, for instance, when the spear-heads of the Allied Nations had dislocated the whole Axis front, the German Information Service (the D.N.B.) asserted that, 'thanks to their mobile tactics, the Axis troops succeeded in the course of yesterday's fighting in splitting up the total area of the battle into individual sectors.' On the following day, when Tunis and Bizerta had already fallen, it was claimed that 'the resistance of the Axis is unshaken.' When the surrender of Tunis was eventually announced, German listeners were comforted by the assurance that 'new defensive positions have been built up, based upon the unshaken southern front.' Even when the Sixth Armoured Division had fought and won the amazing battle of Hamman Lif—at a moment, that is, when it must have been known in Berlin that all was over—the German public were informed that 'Allied attempts to open the roads leading to the Cape Bon peninsula have ended in a bloody reverse.' Even when the Sixth had reached Hammamet, and thus closed all chance of escape, the D.N.B. asserted blandly that 'the Tunisian situation has not essentially changed.' It was thus that the full magnitude of the disaster, the full horror of the surrender of adulated armies and famous generals, broke upon a public wholly unprepared. How are we to account for such ineptitude?

It is evident that Dr. Goebbels had not foreseen that the collapse would be so sudden. He had been assured by the High Command that the Hamman Lif position was unassailable, and that he would have a fortnight to three weeks in which to build up the saga of the heroes of Cape Bon. The break-through of the Sixth Armoured Division, as von Broich has admitted, took the Germans completely by surprise. And the Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda were de-

prived of the days upon which they had counted to prepare and soften the blow. The shock to German opinion has been terrible. They have to bemoan not merely the discomfiture of such national idols as the Afrika Corps and the Hermann Goering Division, but the destruction of a legend. Again and again had they been assured that the U-Boats would prevent all but a tiny trickle of Americans and their equipment reaching the shores of Africa. They had been assured that the *Luftwaffe*, from its bases in Sicily and Sardinia, was master of any situation which might arise. They had been assured that British naval power was a myth dating from the nineteenth century. And within an hour they learnt that all these things were lies.

However disturbing will be the effect of the Tunisian catastrophe on German opinion, the effect on Italy will be infinitely more immediate and profound. The Germans feel that they have lost an outer bastion in circumstances of some humiliation; they do not feel, however, that their inner fortress is directly menaced. The Italians know that at any moment some frightful blow may be dealt them from sea or sky. The Italian Senate, at its six-hour session last Friday, was not accorded any very comforting assurances by the Service chiefs. The Italians know that their air-force has been outclassed, that their navy has lost command of the Italian seas, and that more than half of their army is either annihilated or dispersed away from home. They are aware that their German allies will have many other preoccupations to face during the coming months, and may well be unable to afford the assistance on which, in the last resort, they had counted with confidence. They know that large sections of the Italian people are tired of the war, and that with the expected increase of aerial bombardment dissatisfaction will become wide and deep. Invariably in her hours of danger Italy turns to the House of Savoy; and it is significant that on Sunday last the Rome wireless reported that Tullio Cianetti, Minister of Corporations, had appealed to the Italian people to rally not merely around the fasces, but around 'the escutcheon of

Savoy.' It is, in fact, quite possible that King Victor Emmanuel, who is known to have from the first been bitterly opposed to the war, may emerge from his retirement and resume control. It is quite possible that Mussolini may realise that it is in his country's interest that he should now retire from the scene. We may well be faced suddenly with the fall of the Fascist dictatorship and the creation in Italy of a liberal Government under the aegis of the Royal House.

Mr. Walter Lippman, I observe, foreseeing some such development, suggests that the United Nations should now indicate to Italy their readiness to discuss a separate peace. We may be certain that the two great leaders now in conference in Washington are fully aware of the present opportunity and its implications. But Italy cannot expect to slink out of the war as easily as she slunk into it. The British people have no hostility towards the Italian people. The British soldier knows that the Italian, when rightly led, makes a sturdy fighter. The First Italian Army in the last stages of the Tunisian campaign displayed a tenacity greater even than that which the Afrika Korps can boast. Individual Italians during this war have performed feats of heroism and skill worthy of the great deed of Paulucci in the First War when he sank the Austrian 'Viribus Unitis.' Yet although Italy has no cause to feel ashamed of her soldiers, she has every cause to feel ashamed of her politicians. There is no important treaty which Italy has signed since 1882, which she has not sought either to repudiate or to evade. The world has not forgotten Ouchy, or Corfu, or the Dodecanese, or Albania, or Abyssinia. We have not forgotten the scavenger attack on France. Had Mussolini's fantastic gamble succeeded, the Italian people would have gladly raked in the gains; now that it has failed, they also must share the loss. Italy entered this war gratuitously; she cannot creep out of it without forfeits. To humiliate or to punish the Italian people would be ungenerous; to appease them at this juncture would assuredly be unnecessary and unwise.

41. THE REFUGEE PROBLEM*

LORD WINTERTON, in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* on Monday, defended the handling by the Home Office of last week's debate upon the refugee problem. Relying upon his experience as chairman of the Inter-Governmental Refugees Committee, Lord Winterton complained that those who, in the House of Commons and elsewhere, badger the Front Bench regarding the treatment of these miserable outcasts, 'show no appreciation of the difficulties of the problem'; and he implied that, in their desire to obtain 'cheap cheers,' these enthusiasts introduced into the controversy an element of emotionalism which bore little relation to the actual facts. I do not feel that this describes quite fairly the dissatisfaction left in the minds of many Members by the course of the debate. It had been expected that Mr. Osbert Peake, fresh from his labours at the Bermuda Conference, would be in a position to indicate the decisions which had been taken by His Majesty's Government and the Government of the United States. He did, it is true, suggest that certain useful articles of agreement and alleviation had been reached. Yet he implied that the more important decisions which had been come to could not be divulged for reasons of 'security.' Nor did he convince his audience that the Home Office approached this problem in any spirit of enthusiasm; the angry little taps which he dealt to his manuscript indicated displeasure rather than sympathy. And the impression was conveyed that the Home Office regard all those who interest themselves in the victims of Nazi tyranny as nuisances, sentimentalist, cranks and bores. Mr. Eden, it is true, made it plain that he at least realised that we were discussing a profound human tragedy; Mr. Peake approached the matter as if he were dealing with foot-and-mouth disease.

I have a sincere respect for Mr. Herbert Morrison. I regard him as a man of strength, resource, energy and de-

* May 28, 1943.

lightful humour; but I have a horrible suspicion that he does not regard foreigners as members of the human race. The Home Office do not seem to realise that our authority in Europe and the world is based not so much upon power as upon the confidence and respect inspired by our national conduct. Never in our rough island story has our repute, and therefore our responsibility, been either so wide or deep as today; yet the Home Office do not always seem to understand that this repute is based upon our generosity as well as upon our courage. It would be unfair to reproach the Home Office for the drastic measures which were taken during the dreadful weeks of 1940. They were not solely, or even primarily, to blame. Invasion seemed imminent, and our margin of safety was so narrow that we could not risk the presence of a fifth column in our midst. Urgent measures against refugees of enemy origin had to be taken within a few hours; much confusion, grave hardship, frequent injustice, and (in a few instances) actual cruelty, resulted. The fact remains that the mass internment of refugees in 1940 did leave a stain upon our reputation for decency and calm. If we are to remove that stain we should, now that we have reached safer waters, display an energy of sympathy, and prove that our ancient tradition of asylum is not wholly dead. Is it unpatriotic to desire that our own country, in matters of human suffering, should behave more generously than any other country? Does it display any desire to embarrass the Government to urge that they should treat this problem, not as mere detail of departmental routine, but as a moral issue affecting our international repute? The Home Secretary must know that those who press him in this matter are not seeking to cause him personal inconvenience, or to attract public attention to themselves. The representations which have been made to him privately have been accorded the scantiest courtesy; it is his own fault if the matter has been dragged into the arena of public controversy.

The relations between a Minister and a back-bencher are governed by certain polite conventions. The back-bencher, however well he may be provided with ammunition, however

excellent his communications may be, has to advance across the open against prepared positions. The Government bench is strongly fortified; it possesses vast earth-works of official information, and if these are pierced a retirement in good order may be made into the Maginot Line of 'security,' and 'the public interest.' It is not within the usual convention that a Minister, when faced with sincere criticism, should seek to score points by sniping. There was no reason why Mr. Peake should have dragged in the Bishop of Chichester, and accused him of making no constructive suggestions. The Bishop had, in fact, made a most constructive suggestion. He had suggested that Germany should be asked to release for asylum in other countries a certain number of Jews from Germany and occupied territory. It may well be that the German Government will reject such a suggestion, or even leave it unanswered; but the idea is worth carrying out. Miss Rathbone, again—whose campaign on behalf of the refugees has been courageous and intense—had urged that a special commissioner, 'a new Nansen,' should be empowered to centralise relief; Mr. Peake swept aside this suggestion, and concentrated upon the wholly incidental point that the son of one of the families which Miss Rathbone had cited was Krupps' agent at Istanbul. It may be a terrible thing to be the agent of an armament firm; it may alienate all sympathy from the parents for their boy to be Krupps' agent in Turkey; but all this has nothing whatsoever to do with the central point, namely, that something more should be done to provide asylum for those who are facing massacre and starvation. If we wait only for victory, then there will be but few to save.

It is a fact that since 1933 we in this country have been able to welcome, harbour and maintain a large number of refugees who, but for us, would be either dead or languishing at Dachau or Buchenwald. It is a fact that our Government have taken a leading part in urging and assisting other Governments to display equal receptivity. Those who espouse the cause of the victims of Nazi tyranny are fully aware that even in the best of circumstances only a tiny proportion of

victims could be rescued, and that transport and other difficulties preclude all hope of any mass evacuation. And in fairness to the Home Office it must be admitted that their chilly attitude is due, less to any lack of human sympathy, than to a reputable desire to make no promises which they know they will be unable to fulfil. Yet even when one makes all these reservations, and all these allowances, it is difficult to believe that our Home Office approach the problem with that burning sympathy by which alone the difficulties and obstructions can be surmounted. Nor am I convinced, even by Lord Winterton, that the remedies suggested by the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror are either impracticable or beside the point. Some of them may in truth not be feasible; but others might be at least attempted.

I see, for instance, no overwhelming reason why we should not offer to exchange for Jewish children some of the pro-Nazi or pro-Fascist civilians now in internment in this country or elsewhere. I see no reason why, with the vast areas now at our disposal, temporary refugee camps should not be organised pending dispersal elsewhere. I see no reason why we should not go further than we have gone already in urging and assisting other Governments to accept refugees. And, above all, I see no reason why the United Nations should not appoint a Refugee Commissioner of the calibre of Dr. Nansen, to concentrate the whole negotiations in his hands. Dr. Nansen, at the end of the last war, saved many millions of lives; by personal contact, persuasion and pressure he was able within a few weeks to accomplish far more than could ever be accomplished through the ordinary diplomatic channels; and, above all, he was able to inspire the oppressed with the conviction that the victorious nations were not indifferent to their sufferings, and that Europe had not averted her eyes in impotent lethargy. His problems, it is true, were less terrible than ours today; but if he saved his millions, why could not a new Nansen rescue thousands today?

42. THE BOMBING OF GERMANY*

IN THE House of Commons, last week, Mr. Stokes, with his usual warm-hearted pugnacity, intervened at question-time to draw attention to the ever-growing volume of opinion in this country which considers the indiscriminate bombing of civilian centres both morally wrong and 'strategic lunacy.' Mr. Atlee, quite rightly, answered that our bombing was not indiscriminate, and Sir William Davidson reproved Mr. Stokes for making statements which (he implied) might be of advantage to the enemy. I admit that there are moments when Mr. Stokes is tempted by his bubbling hatred of hypocrisy to overstate unpalatable truths. I admit also that Bomber Command are better judges than is Mr. Stokes of what is, or is not, strategic lunacy. But it is an important fact that the only two places in the world where such points of public conscience can be raised with fearless indiscretion are the British Houses of Parliament and the American Congress. Dr. Goebbels may from time to time twist such indiscretions to his own advantage; yet in fact he is chary of using too frequently material supplied him by the undisciplined Members of the Democratic Legislatures; since he knows full well that for every German who supposes that such outbursts indicate internal dissension, there will be 900 Germans who will mutter inwardly, 'If only, in the Reichstag, we could ask such questions ourselves!' It is in fact the truth that there are many people in this country who are distressed by this fierce bombing of crowded cities, and who have every right, under a free constitution, to make their opinions heard. And even those who, like myself, have come to an uneasy compromise with the paradox. 'In order to conquer evil, one must commit evil,' find it difficult in this matter to steer a steady course between hypocrisy on the one hand and sentimentality on the other.

By what arguments, I ask, can humane and honest people be convinced that the bombing of large cities is in fact a

* June 4, 1943.

necessity? For them it is hypocritical to contend that our pilots or our bomber-sights are so far superior to those of the enemy that our bombs spare the innocent while dealing destruction only to the guilty. It may be true that grave dislocation is caused to German war production by the annihilation of whole streets of workers' dwellings. But it is also true that this annihilation brings death and misery and horror to many civilians. There are some who are able to reconcile this slaughter with their own consciences by contending that the bombing of German and Italian cities will shorten the war, and thus reduce the total sum of human suffering. There is some force in this argument. The fact that an order has been issued forbidding German soldiers from the Ruhr district to return to their homes when on leave does certainly indicate that the German Government dread the effect of our bombardment upon civilian, and ultimately upon military, morale. To that extent it can be argued with some foundation that aerial bombardment in this war will produce the same disintegrating effect upon Germany's powers of internal resistance as in 1918 was produced by the blockade. Yet if this were the only argument I should feel myself that it were better to have another year of military warfare than to achieve victory by bombing in the night. In other words, I believe this to be a sound and most important consideration, but were it the only consideration I should not be wholly convinced. It is not the only consideration.

There are those, of course, who can still all questionings of conscience by the argument, 'Well, after all, it was they who began it.' This argument does not appear to be completely applicable. The fact that other people have behaved abominably does not in the very least convince me that we should behave abominably ourselves. The motto of this great country should be *aliis licet: tibi non licet*, 'others can do it, but not you.' But although this argument does not, to my mind, provide us with a complete justification, it certainly does deprive the enemy of all causes of complaint. It is unworthy of Germany or Italy that they should start screaming, and induce

Franco to squeal with them, when they receive the very treatment which in the days of their triumph they dealt so mercilessly to others. 'We shall erase their cities,' boasted Hitler at the Sportspalast on October 4th, 1940. 'London's fate,' wrote the *Völkischer Beobachter*, on the 17th of the same month, 'is being accomplished with the same logical necessity with which Warsaw and Rotterdam paid for their senseless resistance.' 'I regard,' said General Field-Marshal Kesselring, in April, 1941, 'the purpose of total war by the *Luftwaffe* as having been achieved when the power centres of land attack have been annihilated, and the capacity of the people to resist has been smashed.' 'The Italian Air Force,' boasted Mussolini, on November 18th, 1940, 'dominates the sky and reaches out to far flung objectives. I asked and obtained from the Führer permission for direct Italian participation in the battle against Britain with Italian planes.' These statements were amplified with almost orgiastic ferocity by the German and Italian newspapers and wireless at the time. They vaunted the destruction of Warsaw, Rotterdam, Belgrade, Coventry, Bristol and the rest. This fact does not, to my mind, justify us in vaunting now that we are in the position, with ever increasing force, to repay the debt. But, had they any sense of reality or dignity, our enemies should remember these words and jubilations; and should keep silence now that it is upon them that similar sufferings are being imposed.

'It will hamper German war production': 'It will shake enemy morale': 'It will shorten the war': 'They started it first'—all these are unguents which can certainly assuage the smart of conscience which so many of us feel. I do not derive full comfort from these palliatives. My conviction is steeled rather by the harsh reflection: 'War is a cruel thing. We strove, even to the point of dishonour and cowardice, to avoid it. Now that it has come to us, we must cast aside all soft hypocrisy and wage it grimly ourselves.' I am prepared for this. I do not jubilate when the dams burst, and I know that in a night terror and death came to many humble homes. I set my teeth and say: 'That means six months less of

war; that means six months less of fear and misery for Poles, and Czechs, and French, and Greeks.' I say: 'Let us not flinch or quail; let us do it again and again, for the end is good, although the means are terrible.' And I smile sadly when I listen to Deutschlandsender and hear in the very same transmission long quotations from the Spanish Press regarding the brutality of the R.A.F. coupled with long and quite untruthful paeans of how 'wave after wave of the *Luftwaffe*' have during the last week reduced the centre of London to a 'lake of fire.'

Yet there is, to my mind, another and more potent justification for all this grim business. There are those who, in considering the perplexing problem of the future of Germany, escape from the sense of the insoluble by consoling themselves with the thought that, once peace returns, we shall 'educate' Germany into a civilian mood. I am not quite clear by what means we are to find the 60,000 teachers who would be required. I reflect also that for generations the German people have been educated as no people have ever been educated before. I am not referring only to the State education, but also to the intense and pacific education carried out by the Trades Unions, the Co-operatives and the Socialists. In every town and village of Germany there existed, in 1933, an *Arbeiterkulturbund*, an *Arbeitergesangverein*, an *Arbeiterjugend* organisation. All this was swept away in a single night. What happened to the eleven million workers, the three and a half million Communists, who during all those years had been subject to 'education'? They were swept into war. For they believed that they could win, and that in any case Germany herself would not be punished. The German conscience today aches with a sense of complicity, of *Mitschuld*. They are experiencing more than punishment, they are experiencing retribution; the word *Rache* is on their lips, a word which is ill-translated by 'Revenge,' since it stems from the same root as 'Justice.' Is it hypocrisy to feel that this is the true education? Is it incorrect to feel that the German people, terribly and durably, are being taught that war does not pay?

43. SIR STEPHEN GASELEE*

IT IS with special regret, now that we are about to enter upon the age of uniformity, that we mourn the loss of an uncommon man. Sir Stephen Gaselee, who died suddenly last week, was something more than a Cambridge personality; he was something more than Librarian to the Foreign Office, the Athenaeum and Magdalene College; he was one of those rare individuals who can be eccentric without inhumanity and exceptional without affectation. His loose-knit frame, his strange deportment, his gait, which was simultaneously drawling and purposeful, combined to render him a noticeable figure; he deliberately enhanced the unexpectedness of his appearance by choosing clothes which bore but slight relation either to space or time. The tail-coat which he invariably wore seemed longer, larger, wider than the tail-coats of ordinary mortals; his top-hat—which it, was said, had been specially manufactured from his own design—combined in a truly remarkable way the manner of the Goncourt brothers with the manner of Coke of Norfolk; and his trousers varied from white tussore to startling check. The impression which he created upon those who did not know him was disconcerting. I can remember crossing his path one June morning as I walked with a friend past the pelicans in St. James's Park, 'Who on earth was that?' my friend asked me. 'That was Stephen Gaselee,' I answered, 'the Librarian of the Foreign Office.' 'But why,' my friend persisted, 'why does he dress like a Lithuanian bridegroom?' The description was exact, but I could find no answer to the enquiry. Gaselee was not in any way the type of person who desires to attract attention. He was a modest man, a shy man in his way, a scholar who was interested in many curious things. It could not be said that his appearance, or even his immediate manner were graceful; yet in heart and mind he was one of the most graceful men that I have ever known.

When one considers, or seeks to convey to others, the per-

* June 25, 1943.

sonality of someone whom one has known and liked for many years, one realises how central, yet how incommunicable, an element in any individual is the quality of voice. It has always seemed strange to me that those who have gazed upon the great figures of the past have failed either to notice or to record the tone or inflexion of their speaking voices, and have thus omitted from their descriptions a factor which, in actual life, forms almost a third part of any individuality. Even those who, like Boswell, were intensely desirous to transmit to future generations a vivid physical portrait of their heroes have not been able to hand down to us any convincing sound-picture of the way they spoke. We know that Dr. Johnson wheezed and panted and thundered. We know that Napoleon spoke in a low voice, and that only when he became enraged did the Corsican accent assert itself. We know that the voice of Byron was soft and that of Shelley shrill. We know that in the deep tones of Tennyson's voice were mingled the broad vowels of the Lincolnshire wolds; that Gladstone's tones were resonant and rotund; and that from the huge mass of Bismarck's frame there came the choir-boy accents of a boy of nine. Yet when we compare these meagre indications with the effect, upon our own conception of personality, of voices such as those of Smuts, or Lloyd George, or Curzon, or Churchill, we realise that posterity, owing to the gramophone and the recording-van, will acquire a far more complete sense of personality than has ever been accorded to ourselves. For when I think of Stephen Gaselee it is not his strange shape and habit that remain in my memory, but the cadence of his lovely voice—a voice in which were mingled the grace of the scholar and the delicacy of a man of taste. It was gently emphatic, softly resolute.

Gaselee was the type of conversationalist who relies less upon the taut interchange of epigram than upon the provision of irrelevant and curious items of information. He was the hospitable type of conversationalist, in that he regarded his interlocutors not as antagonists but as guests; he would open his crowded cupboard and spread upon the table varied

objects of beauty and delight. He could speak about Coptic liturgy, and the origin of rhyme in Latin mediaeval literature, and the development of the Burgundy trade-routes, and the several Madeira vintages, and the history of the British colony at Oporto, and the divergent attitude adopted towards State archives by Lords Castlereagh and Palmerston. He was a most clubbable man. What rendered his presence so agreeable, what will render his absence such a gap, is that he did not really care for conversation which centred entirely upon current events. He would, with his accustomed courtesy, listen quite amicably to stories about last night's air-raid; the boredom which he felt was not visible in any outward signs of distaste; it would be conveyed rather by the studied politeness of his patience; the words of the story-teller would cease upon the midnight with no pain. But when the conversation switched away from the war or the Labour Conference or rationing, a light would kindle again in Gaselee's eye, and suddenly he would be talking quietly about the Desert Fathers or the several varieties of the Malvazia grape. The charm of the information he imparted was that, although strictly accurate, it bore generally upon the by-paths rather than upon the high-roads of experience. He was always leading one down curious lanes, parting the branches as he went, gently indicating rare ferns and flowers in the hidden coppice, suggesting comparisons and associations which one had not imagined before. And as he spoke, his accurate and modest voice gave a harmony to all he said.

As Librarian to the Foreign Office it was his duty to safeguard and preserve important State documents. He fulfilled this duty with the conscientiousness of an ideal public archivist. It was also his duty to supervise, and sometimes to edit, the memoranda on treaty-precedents prepared by his able and industrious staff. In this also he displayed reverence, some assiduity and sense. But Gaselee had an original mind, and would never have been content merely to follow the beaten highways of his predecessors. To the ordinary work of the Foreign Office Library (an institution which has for years

maintained a high standard of accuracy and research) he added two personal innovations. He showed great courage and latitude of vision in putting at the disposal of students such original documents as might, under less imaginative guardianship, have remained hidden for many years. No man could have given more generously of his time and attention to the British and foreign students who appealed to him for assistance. He went further. During his tenure of his post he was able gradually to accumulate small libraries of standard works in our several Embassies and Legations abroad. The Embassy at Berlin, for instance, was stocked by Gaselee with works upon the German Reich which would have been beyond the means of any ordinary Attaché. He took a constant personal interest in the quality of those small libraries in our Missions abroad, and many a young diplomatist will have been grateful to Gaselee for providing him on the spot with works of reference and enlightenment which he would himself have been unable either to purchase or to transport.

It is as a host, however, that I shall remember Gaselee best. I recall an evening which I spent with him in his rooms at Magdalene College. The other guest was A. E. Housman, who arrived wearing a stiff straw hat which certainly dated from the publication of the *Shropshire Lad*. The food was well cooked and chosen; the several vintages were superb. I sat there late into the night listening to the two scholars discussing prosody. Housman rapped out the metres with a dry hand upon the mahogany; the glasses tinkled as he did so; Gaselee, with a deft mixture of deference and contradiction, soothed that prickly soul. On and on they went talking about dochmiacs and choriambes. The bells of Cambridge echoed solemnly around us. Housman rose suddenly and perched his straw hat upon his head. Gaselee saw him out into the night. 'A charming man,' he said gently when he returned to me. 'A charming man.' 'A great poet,' I answered, 'in any case.' 'And what a Latinist!' said Gaselee, shaking his head in awed respect.

44. PRINCESS PLESS*

THE OBITUARY notices upon Princess Pless which have appeared this week in many newspapers describe her as a 'famous Edwardian hostess.' This is an incorrect description. The women who, during the first decade of this century, fulfilled that role were not as a rule very human beings. They were often hard, ambitious and greedy for money; they wore high collars of tulle, tautened with little sticks of whalebone, and their laughter was high and artificial as their tiaras. The enamel of their Fabergé reticules was scratched and clawed by heavy emerald rings; the huge bowls of pampas grass in their boudoirs shaded many photographs in silver frames; the bangles upon their arms tinkled harshly as they dealt the cards or passed the tea-cups; their sympathies were restricted and their emotions concealed; they lacked impulse; even their amusement expressed itself in a dry cackle at the solecisms of those who had not learnt their drill. As the reign of Edward VII drew to its heavy and luxurious end a slight change did, it is true, come over the leaders of Edwardian society. The countless side-tables, with their bonbonnières, their silver ornaments and their large flounced lamps, were replaced by simpler styles; the photograph-frames were stored away in some unused linen-cupboard, and firm Chinese hard-stones ousted the filigree nonsense which had survived from the days of Victorian excess. But these hostesses were hard, none the less, hard and cold and slightly clammy as the jade fish upon the mantelpiece. Such was Edwardian hospitality, with the scent of bath-salts hanging heavily in the bedroom corridors. Daisy Cornwallis West was not like this. She married Hans Heinrich XII, Prince of Pless, when she was still only a school-girl; she remained a school-girl all her life.

She came of a good-looking family, and in her childhood she was regarded as plain. Even when she was known as one of the loveliest women in Europe, there was always

* July 23, 1943.

something wrong about her nose. It was mobile, impertinent, excited; it prevented her from ever acquiring the static beauty of the classical type; it made one wonder how anyone so lovely could be so totally unconscious of her looks. The tom-boy indiscretions into which it provoked her, the horrifying tactlessness of many of her questions and remarks were never resented: it was adorable to discover someone so reckless in a calculating world. She was not, in any way, a clever woman; she was totally deprived of shrewdness; yet by sheer warm-heartedness she won the devotion of a selfish man such as Edward VII, of an introverted man such as William II, of her heavy but benevolent father-in-law and of all the countless retinue by whom she was surrounded and adored. Even in the height of the First German War, when food was scarce, the station-master at Berchtesgaden would slip a greasy packet of sausage into her compartment with a pencilled note, '*Grüss Gott!*' At Pless and Fürstenstein there would be enormous house-parties of forty guests; the state maintained in her several palaces was such that when she left a room a bell would ring and a powdered footman would accompany her from door to door; and yet the Ambassador would find when he retired to rest that his hostess had provided him with an apple-pie bed, and there would be giggles and pillow-fights along the upper passages. But she had her serious side. She was appalled, when she first went to Germany, by housing conditions in the Silesian towns. She pestered the Chancellor about it, she pestered the Emperor, she enlisted the sympathy and attention of the Empress. And the grim tenants of the Pless estates acquired for this rollicking English girl an affection which withstood two wars.

The importation of these school-girl junketings into Pless or Fürstenstein was not wholly a success. Her husband was almost twenty years older than she was, and he possessed a conventional mind. He was always urging her to be more '*fürstlich*,' at which her young laughter would ring up among the painted heroes and cherubs of the ceiling. Her father-in-law, the reigning prince, had greater understanding. Even

when she came down to dinner in a dress made from the stable sacks he was amused. The Empress Frederick (herself an embittered exile) took the home-sick girl under her special protection; the Emperor William never ceased to surround her with the most devoted solicitude. Yet the romps to which she had been accustomed in Denbighshire or at Newlands Manor lost something of their spontaneity and lightness when transported to Silesia. The young German counts and barons and lieutenants who were asked to Fürstenstien, while wishing to show how readily they could adopt English ways, were never able to discover where to draw the line. One night at Fürstenstein there was to be a picnic in a ruined tower in the forest. The servants had been sent there in the afternoon with glass and silver and china; the dinner-table in the ruin was set out as in the great hall of the castle; the powdered footman stood solemnly behind each guest. The usual romp began and degenerated into a riot: the table was overturned and the glass and china shattered; in one memory at least remains the picture of a vast silver candelabra lying upon the floor with its candles dripping wax into a great pool of champagne.

In the fifty-four years during which Princess Pless lived in Germany she never mastered the German language. She never managed to comprehend the niceties of German etiquette or the strong dynastic traditions which inspired the Hochberg family. 'I never could,' she confessed in her memoirs, 'understand pedigrees.' The only German terms with which she was familiar were those used in hospitals and nursing establishments: she never paid attention to the stilted etiquette of German courts. For her the 'canapé' was just a sofa; for the Germans at that date it represented a symbol of importance. When she was young she was apt on all occasions to interrupt. The Germans naturally assumed that her incompatibility in such matters was due to English arrogance: yet her unfaltering gaiety, the almost childlike confidence which she gave with open hands to everyone, pierced even their obtuseness. She became a 'character' whom they re-

garded, sometimes with bewilderment, sometimes with irritation, but more often with amused affection. When the First German War came upon her she never for one moment abjured her native country: she used her influence, which was great, to do everything she could for British prisoners of war. The Emperor (and it is to his credit) never failed to protect her; he even invited her to come to Pless where he had established his headquarters. It was pointed out to him that anxiety would be caused if an Englishwoman, and one who never hesitated to proclaim her patriotism, were to act as hostess at G.H.Q. She was sent off to work on a hospital train upon the Serbian front, and finally relegated to Berchtesgaden. When peace came the great Pless estates (which extended over an area as large as an English county) were distributed; that enormous fortune shrank to a mere income; she lost her German nationality, she was never granted Polish nationality, and she became again the British subject which she had, in fact, always been.

Her last years were tragic. Her youngest son was imprisoned by the Germans and died after his release. Her eldest son, now a Polish citizen, is living in exile. Her second son is serving as an officer in the Polish forces. She herself became afflicted with paralysis and loss of memory; she retired finally to Fürstenstein, and it is said that she never knew that Germany and England were again at war. In that great Silesian castle she died alone. Gone were the old pomp and magnificence, the 4,000 retainers, the state carriages, the private train, the ropes of pearls. Her pleasure in such things had always been the surprised pleasure of a school-girl with a new frock. In a snobbish world she remained the least snobbish person that I have ever known: in a hard world she glowed with gaiety and kindness. She had only one enemy in all the world, and that was loneliness; it is sad that this grave enemy should have conquered in the end.

45. THE FALL OF MUSSOLINI*

THE OTHER day, in a garden near my home, we held the village fête. Notices in red and blue chalk were hung along the drive indicating with crude arrows where one should go in. The iron-wrought gate in the yew hedge stood open, flanked by two boy scouts who gripped their staves in firm lictorial fashion. Beside the gate was a kitchen table and a chair on which was seated a pillar of the Women's Institute, who received the sixpences of the villagers as they poured in. The great trees beyond threw their vast shadows, not only upon the hayfield which had once been lawn, but upon rows of little tea-tables and a vast tin urn. Upon their solemn trunks were tacked further notices: 'Tea 4d.' And around that large and varied garden, in among the flower-beds and the limes, were arranged all manner of side-shows. There was Aunt Sally with her pipe already broken, with her scant skirt already disarranged, facing with black and dog-faced fury the missiles which we hurled. There was the skittle-run, and over there the treasure-corner, and in the shade of the beech tree a fish pond where with trembling wands we guided the hooks into the eyes. The statue of Minerva, backed by her neat semi-circle of yew, gazed upon this scene with dignity and distaste. Tucked roughly into the clematis of a high garden-pier an amplifier relayed to the assembled crowd the music of a hidden gramophone. The village maidens, in an ecstasy of poise, danced upon the sward. The children paraded in their fancy clothes. And as I strolled from booth to booth, I came upon three targets, bearing in black charcoal the semblances of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo sketched upon large sheets of paper pinned to boards. For the sum of 2d. one could hire six darts wherewith to assail the enemies of mankind. Hitler and Tojo, when I got there, were already riddled by the pin-holes of expended darts. The Duce was practically immune. 'You have not,' I remarked to the man

*August 13, 1943.

who ran the show, 'done well with Mussolini.' 'No,' he answered, 'they prefer Hitler and the Jap. Now that Musso's down and out they say, "It seems hardly fair somehow."' Once again I stood amazed by the unerring instinct of the British people.

But is it so unerring? Among the Kentish villagers the old sanity may well remain. Yet the politically minded seem to have lost something of their common sense. It is often my privilege to address left-wing audiences. They listen to me with courtesy but with disbelief. It seems to me that any statements which do not accord, either with their own brand of religion, or with the brand of heresy which they expect me to expound, are regarded (politely but firmly) as lies. I notice that when in reply to questions I give answers which do not correspond to the black or white of their expectation, they assume that smile of inner righteousness which says 'Such is the light within me that I can see the transparency of his untruth.' It may be that the liberal temperament today has lost all cutting-edge, and snips aimlessly like cardboard shears. It may be that the ideologues are so in love with their ideas that they dismiss experience as a form of class distinction and knowledge as a capitalist device. Yet it is a sad thing for any democracy to lose its grip on facts or to identify as 'propaganda' (by which is meant the statement of ideas other than one's own) all endeavour to reach some objective assessment of values. Our distrust of the totalitarian systems is based upon the fact that they seek by violence to create the illusion that their own truths are absolute and universal. We know that most truths are conditioned both by time and space.

Yet surely it is an absolute and universal truth that justice becomes improbable when any man seeks to be both judge, witness and executioner, in a case affecting his own interests, prejudices or passions. My Kentish villagers were right in feeling that Mussolini has ceased to be an object for levity or irresponsible affront: but he has not ceased to be an object of justice. My left-wing friends would probably ascribe any hesitation on my part to murder the Duce as being due, not

to any abstract reverence for the processes of law, but to some wholly undefinable and non-existent 'vested interest.' And since men lack courage to swim against a popular tide they may betray the law in order to please a momentary impulse of the multitude. A serious problem of international law is undoubtedly raised by the intimation conveyed by the United Nations to neutral Powers inviting them not to grant asylum to those of the Axis leaders who are demonstrably responsible for war and massacre. If such refugees have in fact committed criminal acts which can be proved against them, then they can and must be surrendered by neutral countries under the existing treaties of extradition. But if no criminal acts can actually be proved against them then they are, in law, not criminals escaping from trial but political refugees seeking asylum from their enemies. Such is the law of nations, for the re-establishment of which we claim to be fighting. The only way out of the difficulty would seem to be the constitution of some impartial Tribunal by whom responsibility could be assessed.

It is not, I admit, an easy thing to view Mussolini objectively or to consider his fate in terms of formal justice. I have seen him once only, and that was in November, 1922, when, but a few weeks after his accession to power, he came to Lausanne to confer with Curzon and Poincaré upon the Eastern question. On that occasion, although he strutted horribly through the corridors of the hotel, he behaved without ostentation in the conference room. He was in fact ill at ease at being confronted, at the very outset of his diplomatic career, with two such tigers of argument and statecraft. Brown and hunched he shifted in his chair, turning his brown wrists uneasily in their starched cuffs; goggling enormous eyes from right to left. He did not, on that occasion, seem a formidable figure: he seemed bewildered, flustered, uncomfortable and most anxious to please.

My hatred of him (and it became intense) was of later growth. It may be true, as some assert, that he was a sincere patriot and one who really believed that the Italian people

were the rightful inheritors of Roman majesty and that they would prove capable of fulfilling the imperial destiny which he imposed upon them. Yet foreseeing that his example would prove even more terrible and contagious than his acts, recognising in the Corfu incident of 1923, in his fierce Abyssinian venture, successful strokes of illegality which would tempt others to commit even more disastrous illegalities elsewhere, I came to regard him as the most dangerous and reckless of all the enemies of peace. It seemed horrible to me that he should be able to rouse in the gentle Italian people passions of envy, suspicion and aggressiveness which could only end in war. I would indulge in day-dreams in which I would picture the destruction of the Mussolini legend in the most humiliating and resounding terms. But even in my wildest day-dreams I never contemplated such a fall as this.

Now that he has ceased to be a menace and become a cautionary tale, my rage is calm and cold. I do not desire to give to his catastrophe the aura of martyrdom or to render him the victim of anything more than his own turpitude. If in fact he has been accessory to murder, then let him be tried and punished according to the law of nations and the law of his own land. But if no extraditable offence can be proved against him, then other means of justice must be found. Few students of recent history would deny that the War-Guilt clause of the Treaty of Versailles was ineffective, mainly because it was not impartial. It is far easier to attribute the responsibility for the present war to those who were in fact responsible; but it is important that this attribution should not take the form of an *ex-parte* statement; we have no desire to perpetuate legends; what we do desire is that the verdict of the moment should, in letter and spirit, accord with the verdict of history.

46. WEEDS*

AUGUST, THE *weod-monath* of our ancestors, is the month of weeds:

‘This is the month of weeds.

Kex, charlock, thistle,
Among the shorn bristle
Of stubble drop seeds.

This is the month of weeds.

‘Spurry, pimpernel, quitch,

Twine in the stubble,

Making for trouble;

With nettle in ditch,

Spurry, pimpernel, quitch.’

August is not only the month of weeds; it is the month in which those of us who are clumsy with the shears, who have not those deft ripples of the back-muscles which make the good harvester, are set down, in our few hours of holiday, to scratch and pull and push these horrible invaders from the soil. There is the process known as ‘digging them in’ which is not only exhausting in itself but which stimulates the weed to recurrence: *tamen usque recurrat*. There is the Dutch hoe, which when the weeds are small or young and the soil loose, produces neat and rapid effects, marred only by the difficulty of thereafter collecting and destroying the frail seedlings which have been dislodged. And there is the trug and hand-fork system of weeding, which requires patience but no excessive industry, and by which one can without undue effort clear three square yards in as many hours. I prefer the latter system since it is good for soil and soul alike. Not only are the weeds enucleated, but one’s character is improved by doing a dull thing thoroughly. The weeds that the spade digs in, the weeds that the hoe snaps, are by this slow process taken individually, each little severed stem becomes a case of conscience; to leave it un-eradicated is a moral defeat; a sense of efficient achieve-

*August 20, 1943.

ment is caused when the most brittle tap-root is gouged like a carrot from the earth.

One comes to acquire, in those long silent hours broken only by the grunt of some special effort, a new intimacy with the soil. One comes to learn that such phrases as 'the ground is baked hard' or 'the ground is soggy' are mere generalisations, taking small account of the gradations of difference between what is wet and what is dry. One comes to learn that there are certain conditions of dryness in which even the celandine can be extracted without breaking, in which even bind-weed can be pulled from the root; and that there are certain conditions of wetness when the handle of one's fork becomes a smear of greasy mud and when the little roots of the buttercup (my favourite weed) stick to one's fingers as one flicks them into the trug. Everybody has his preferences and his prejudices in regard to weeds. Groundsel is the most amenable of all, since it pulls easily and can be given to the birds. There are some experts who regard celandine as a special enemy, and who will not admit that if one treats it gently one will find that the tubers come away in a bunch together, grouped neatly as the breasts of Diana of Ephesus. Bindweed, one must admit, is hell; the common sow-thistle irritates the hand, exudes when broken a really horrible milk, and requires deep digging if it is to be destroyed; couch grass we all know and loathe; goosegrass, from which the Swedes make coffee in war-time, can be pulled if tact is shown; the plantains are not my enemies, since the pleasure of extracting them is greater than the trouble caused; to weed nettles is not an afternoon's occupation, it is a major campaign; as a relaxation I recommend weeding pimpernel and shepherd's purse; but worst of all my enemies is annual meadow grass. A bed will have been cleaned and raked: one looks at it with satisfaction as one wheels away the heavy barrow, and a week later a brown beard will have spread across the bed, '*un frisson d'eau sur de la mousse*,' which in a few days will turn again to green. Such sights in war-time fill one with despair.

I hold the doctrine that nothing is really dull provided that

you do it perfectly; and that nothing can be interesting if you allow laziness to intervene. The desire for perfectibility is implanted so deeply in the human breast that, as one carries away the trug, or wheels away the barrow, more pain is caused by the thought of the tap-roots one has left behind than pleasure by the contemplation of the heap of weed deposited upon the dump. Yet few human contentments can compare with the sight, after long hour's work, of the smoke from the bad weeds drifting across the summer woods, or the thought that the good weeds, neatly piled together, are making humus for future enrichment. Having done one's own work one can leave the secret processes of nature to do theirs. And for a few short hours one is lulled by the illusion that in fact by effort one has rid the bed of weeds; and as the bonfire crackles and the flames twist in their own smoke there is comfort in the thought that the enemy has been fixed, brought to action and destroyed. Yet we know in our hearts that husbandry, as peace, depends upon constant vigilance and constant renewal of energy. We have all been obliged during the war to surrender our gardens to the tyranny of nature; our lawns have become hayfields; potatoes and cabbages disgrace beds designed for primulas and snap-dragons; there are nettles clustering around the statue of Pomona: and in the paved walk the dandelion ousts the thyme. But many of us have striven by personal effort to clear some beds at least to remind us that here was once a flower garden. And all this, I repeat, has been good for the soul.

Never again shall we reproach the garden-boy for taking a whole afternoon to clear a single bed. Never again shall we lightly decide to have a new azalea border by the moat. The defensive war which through four long years we have conducted so unsuccessfully against Nature has taught us more about gardening than we ever knew before. Today we know our own particular weeds with that intimacy which can only come from long hatred. We have learnt that the enemy, when apparently defeated, returns with fresh reserves the very moment that our back is turned. We have learnt that in

gardening complacency is fatal and appeasement of no avail at all. And in this matter of weeds we have enormously increased our experience. Even town-dwellers must by now have come to notice with amazement the strange habits of weeds and wild-flowers in war. How curious it is that the loose-strife should blaze among the ruins of Paternoster Row; that the rosebay should flourish among the burnt heaths of Surrey; and that poppies should settle suddenly among the bomb-craters on the Downs. Why should nettles display so marked a preference for demolished areas, even as in the past they chose archaeological sites as the happiest of all their hunting-grounds? How comes it that the seeds of wild-flowers which have never known the London streets should now germinate and prosper among the charred ruins of our churches and halls? Or that seeds which have remained dormant all these years should suddenly have been awakened by the scream of bombs to a fertility which they never previously displayed? Our botanists have noticed this phenomenon; I trust that they will publish the results of their research.

It was always known that the seeds of certain weeds, such as the large plaintain, can remain dormant for forty years. The undersoil thrown up by bombing has obviously released seeds that have been buried almost for a century. It is a disturbing thought. Dr. Salisbury has calculated that an ordinary plant of shepherd's purse can spread over a flower-bed as many as five thousand seeds, all capable of germination. An ordinary field poppy can produce sixty thousand seeds on a single plant. A foxglove, it is estimated, yields nearly a million seeds. The groundsel, most precocious of all weeds, can produce a family six weeks after its own birth. Other weeds, such as the yellow toadflax, can send up as many as two hundred shoots from their own roots. The ground elder spreads secretly at a terrific pace and so does the rosebay willowherb. These two enemies, once firmly established, are practically ineradicable. I derive some comfort from these horrible thoughts. I realise that, in view of the fierce profligacy of nature, it is a triumph for the gardener if any flowers grow at all.

47. KING BORIS*

WHEN I was a child I was once invited to the birthday party of the late King Boris of Bulgaria. My recollection of the occasion is precise only in bits. I can recall the appearance and manner of his mother. She was a very French princess and, although in no way a beautiful woman, she possessed great nervous charm. When she turned her haggard face rapidly from left to right the diamond pendants which she wore as ear-rings swung like the glass drops of chandeliers. She spoke very rapidly and in an apprehensive voice. His father I remember also. He was not at that date as portentously portly as he became in later years. A sinister man he seemed, with great silver epaulettes above his green Bulgarian uniform, with the stars of many orders strewn across his breast, with gloved hands resting heavily upon the hilt of a cavalry sword, with eyes that shifted under angular brows. I can remember vaguely that we were given a huge tea in a large dining-room, and I recall the white cotton gloves of Balkan footmen handing us sugared buns and walnuts dipped in toffee. Of Prince Boris himself, who was then two years old, I can remember nothing at all. But I carried back from that party a little bonbonnière made of moss-green plush and tied with ribbons. Glued upon the plush surface of this object was a photograph of the little prince, his white frock stiff around his little legs, his hair carefully curled and arranged. His appearance was almost identical with that of his successor, King Simeon II.

Forty years passed before I met Boris again. The hair which, in my photograph, had been arranged so luxuriantly around his baby cheeks, had almost entirely disappeared. I was faced with a bald man with a long thin nose: this nose, which his flatterers assured him was Bourbon, was in fact pure Coburg; yet it did not suggest the fox-like scheming of his father Ferdinand: it suggested only immense curiosity. Owing

*September 3, 1943.

to the fact that we had last met at his birthday party, to the fact that I remember the adored mother who had died when he was young, or to the fact, perhaps, that it was a relief for him to talk frankly to a visiting Englishman, he kept me there in his study for a whole morning. Without in any way casting disloyal reflections upon his father, he spoke in detail about the unhappiness of his own childhood. He told me how, in 1918, when his father had suddenly bolted, leaving to him an unpopular and menaced throne, he had found in Stambuliisky, the peasant dictator of Bulgaria, a man who had shown him almost parental affection. When Stambuliisky had been murdered another period of isolation and danger had opened for him during the rough-handed rule of Tzan-kov. He was surrounded by enemies and intriguers on every hand. The Sobranye was little more than a hornets' nest of politicians intriguing for place and power; the army, still smarting under two disastrous defeats, was not imbued either with patience or sagacity; the refugees from Macedonia had retained their comitadji mentality, and assassination lurked at every corner.

He told me how again and again, when the sound of loud voices reached him from the hall below, he had imagined that the hour had come, and expected the door of his study to burst open upon an inrush of regicides. He told me how, in the early hours of one morning, he had been roused by the tinkle of the house telephone beside his bed. The captain of the guard reported that armed men were approaching the palace, and urged him to escape at once. He rose, donned the tweed shooting-suit which he had bought at Aberdeen (he was amused by this coincidence) and reached the garden where he had parked his little car. Away he drove through a back exit and out to his shooting-box in the mountains. As the dawn rose on the Bulgarian uplands he waited there, with his shotgun in his hand, watching the white road which led to Sofia. The early sunlight showed the dust of four large cars dashing out from the capital. Was it death? Was it abdication? He walked slowly down the hill to meet them.

They saluted as they stepped out of their cars. They handed him a paper. It was a decree, appointing a new Government, which he was obliged to sign. 'Did your hand tremble?' I asked him. 'Yes,' he said.

'But you see,' he added, smiling, 'by that time I did not feel that I was really alone. During all those years when I was ignored and excluded I had spent my time getting to know and love the peasants. Stambuliisky had taught me that they were the real Bulgaria and that they would understand. They were always on my side. They are on my side today.' I believed at the time, and I believe today, that in all he told me he was being perfectly sincere. He did not adopt the accustomed royal manner, which is a blend of extreme garrulity on trivial matters and a blank-faced reticence on all important affairs. Nor was the impression he conveyed in any sense a Balkan impression; he did not seek to impose upon me his intimate acquaintance with the life and literature of Western Europe. In talking to him one felt that one was talking to a Frenchman of wide culture and deep intelligence—a *norman*, an *inspecteur des finances*. He spoke as a man who through years of difficulty and danger had acquired self-confidence; as a man whom destiny had obliged to deal with many wicked men and many sinister matters; but as a man who had passed through this ordeal without becoming cynical, who retained much faith in the simpler virtues of human beings, and who could find unending interest and pleasure in the mysteries of Nature and the devices of science.

He spoke at length and frankly about the international situation. He explained to me how disturbing it was for him to observe how month by month Germany was extending her economic strangle-hold over Bulgaria, and how much he regretted that France and England did not realise with sufficient clarity how, little strand by little strand, the great cobweb of German economic exploitation was spreading throughout South-Eastern Europe. He told me how he himself had striven hard to further the policy of the Balkan *entente* and to improve Bulgaria's relations with Yugoslavia,

Rumania and Greece. This was no easy policy to impose upon his country. The army, the Macedonians and many of the politicians were still imbued with Chauvinist conceptions, and would brand him as unpatriotic were he openly to renounce all claim to Bulgarian expansion. The relations of confidence which he had been able gradually to establish with King Alexander had been shattered by the latter's assassination, and for some reason he and Prince Paul had never yet been able to hit it off. The Bulgarian people had, in addition to the deep feeling for Russia, retained sentiments of great respect for Great Britain and the United States. But what help could he expect from London or Washington? '*On se fiche de nous*,' he said. I protested lamely. 'But yes, but yes,' he said, 'to them I am but a Balkan monarch with a long nose.'

The obituary notices which I have read on King Boris in the English newspapers seem to divide themselves into two categories. There are those writers who know the true story and who tell it correctly: such writers admit that Boris was a gifted man, and that until 1934 or so the policy which he followed was correct. They admit that he stood out longer than many people expected, and was able to defer his final surrender until 1941. Had he been a stronger man he might have emulated the fine examples of King Christian of Denmark or King George of Greece. Had his acquaintance and contacts with Great Britain been more intimate and more constant he might have realised that the German triumph of 1940 could not be lasting. But the other school of thought which identifies Boris with his horrible father, and which represents him as having 'betrayed his country,' is neither accurate nor well-informed. Three times in recent history have the Bulgarians chosen the course of disaster: their conduct during their short periods of triumph has not entitled them to sympathy; but it is incorrect to place upon the shoulders of King Boris the sole responsibility for what was a national, and not a personal, error.

48. HITLER SPEAKS*

IN THE excitement of the last few days, when triumph or disappointments have succeeded each other almost hourly, Adolf Hitler's speech of a week ago has received but scant attention. Yet how significant, in fact, was the change both of tone and substance. Gone are the days when, at Nürnberg or at the Sportspalast, his every phrase was followed by the rhythmic panting of '*Sieg Heil!*' that dreadful chorus which was as incisive as a steam-saw screaming in the woodshed, as sad and sinister as a vast sea tearing at the shingle of some northern beach. Gone are the days when, to the accompaniment of bands and banners, his high scream of hatred and vituperation would echo through the amplifiers, driving, as he himself confessed, 'the broad masses into an ever more precipitous hysteria.' Gone are the days when the whole world listened with bated breath to the pronouncements of a creator of destiny. In place of this we had the monotone of a disillusioned man, gabbling with incomprehensible speed through the manuscript before him. The miracle of the wireless never ceases to confound me. There was the Führer sitting before the microphone in some distant Pomeranian or Bavarian castle spouting his piece so breathlessly that one could hear, across those miles of ether, the very inhalations of his lungs. And there was I, crouched above the receiving-set in an English cottage, while outside the sullen September day waned across the Weald of Kent. From the latticed window at my side I could see down across the fields towards the hop-garden, already half-stripped so that on the eastern half the poles stood naked, while on the western half the hops still clustered. A little owl settled clumsily upon a branch of an oak, and as I listened to the Führer rattling along in his Bohemian accent I could see its round head and twin ears sharp against the sunset. Only once did Hitler raise his voice above a tired monotone. He spoke

*September 17, 1943.

of the ring of steel forged round the German homeland. '*Niemals*,' he shouted, '*werden sie es zerbrechen*.' At that moment only did the old Hitler return. And as the light waned over the Weald of Kent the proceedings were concluded by the singing by some Berlin choir of that horrible *Horst Wessel Lied*.

It is a strange, but not uncommon, psychological phenomenon that Hitler, who could lash himself into real paroxysms of rage against imaginary enemies, such as Benes, Chamberlain or the Jews, should, when confronted with a grievance in real life, be so comparatively calm. He said some sharp things about King Victor Emmanuel, about Badoglio and about the Italian Chief of Staff. He pointed out, with full justification, that Germany had rescued Italian armies in Greece and Africa and had been foremost in the defence of Italian soil. He paid his tribute to Mussolini—'the greatest son of the Italian land since the downfall of the ancient Roman Empire.' He uttered his threats: the measures which Germany would now be obliged to take were 'very severe'; they would be carried out with 'cold determination'; it was not the fault of Germany if henceforward Italy were to become a battlefield. He made his excuses: the defection of Italy meant little from the military point of view; Germany could now continue the struggle 'free from all burdensome restrictions'; the homeland was not in danger. Nor was it possible, so excellent were the relations between himself and his generals, that any July 25th could happen in Germany. All these things, as was to be expected, were included in his speech. Yet, curiously enough, the old self-pity, the old incitation of hatred, were omitted. In place of the familiar demagogue screaming for blood and battle, we had an exhausted schoolmaster rattling through his end-of-term address.

Yet what had the Führer in mind when, in the very first sentence of this vital allocution, he expressed relief that he was now able to speak 'without the necessity of lying to myself or to the public'? We know from his own writings that he has never placed truth in the forefront of political virtues;

but thus publicly to assert by implication that hitherto he has been obliged to deceive his public is to admit a weakness which can scarcely be very heartening to the German people. Or did he mean no more than that it was a relief at last to make a speech in which he was not obliged, out of courtesy to an ally, to pay some tribute to the assistance rendered to Germany by the Italian fleet and armies? We ourselves are aware of the strange exaltation which is engendered in moments of peril by the reflection that henceforward one can rely only upon one's own efforts. Yet never in our worst moments were we so terribly alone as Germany stands today. There is around her an angered ocean of hatred, and even those of her allies which she still retains are showing signs of weakening. And was Hitler after all so very sure that on Friday last he told the stark truth to the listening millions of the Reich? He made no mention of the U-boat campaign which has figured so prominently in previous speeches. His references to the retreat on the Russian front were vague in the extreme. He suggested, it is true, that other withdrawals might become necessary before Germany was thrown back upon her ring of steel. But did he really allow the German people any insight into the appalling complications which the surrender of Italy is bound to entail? His speech was astute enough, and it reads well. But to a bewildered Germany, to a Germany longing for assurance and comfort, the tired monotone to which they listened can have brought but little hope.

The swift and successful counter-measures taken by the German High Command may for the moment have allayed immediate anxiety. The impatient hopes entertained by many people in this country may for the moment have been chilled. The rescue of Mussolini was certainly an outstanding feat of enterprise and *Niebelungentreue*. The battle of Salerno is one of which every German has the right to feel proud. It may well be that for the moment (but only for the moment) the reversal of fortune in Italy may have brought encouragement to the doubting satellites of Germany. But even the

most credulous German can scarcely believe that it is an advantage to the Reich to be forced to fight a major campaign in an area as exposed to sea attack and as restricted in communications as is the Italian peninsula. Lord Haig used to say that 'news is seldom as good and seldom as bad as it appears at first'; the situation created by the Italian surrender may not for the moment be quite as favourable as we had hoped or quite as disastrous as the Germans had feared.

But apart from the strategical advantages which it will assuredly give us, we should not forget the immense psychological effect of this catastrophe upon the German mind. The Germans have always regarded the Italians as the shrewdest of opportunists; for the Italians at this stage of the war to have accepted unconditional surrender means that the most calculating race in Europe estimated the chances of the Axis as nil. That was a truth which the Führer hesitated to disclose. But it is a truth which will eat like acid into the uncertain German soul.

As I listened to Hitler speaking on Friday I forced myself to imagine that I was a German hearing, in this hour of calamity, my leader's words. I should have known that, whatever happened in central Italy, the British had secured command of the Mediterranean; that their airfields were creeping ever close and closer; that the U-boats had for the moment been defeated; that vast new armies and unlimited equipment were being amassed for invasion; that the Russians, in their summer campaign, had inflicted grave losses on the German forces and occupied vital areas of land. I should have detected no note in the tired voice of my leader of any certitude of victory; I should have heard only an appeal to stand or die. And I should have known that nothing which could happen could improve the situation, and that everything which would happen was sure to make it worse. And if an owl, as I listened, had perched upon the oak, I should not have recognised the bird of Pallas Athene; I should have seen the harbinger of doom.

49. BLITZ MEMORIES*

I WENT this week to the film of the Battle of Britain which has been put together by the American Office of War Information for the instruction and enlightenment of the United States public. It is, as might be expected, a highly competent and not unflattering evocation of the experiences of 1940. The introductory captions are surmounted by the American eagle with taut and stylised wings outstretched; through this rigid portal the tune of the British Grenadiers begins to twine its merry self-confidence, to be lost, all too soon, in the tramp and blare of Hitler's victories and the sad confusion of Dunkirk. The map of Europe flashes upon the screen and country after country goes up in sudden smoke; to the whine of sad tunes Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France are consecutively submerged. For a moment the figure of Adolf Hitler struts jerkily upon the terrace of the Trocadero gazing across to the wide limbs of the Eiffel tower; the tanks lumber through a deserted Place de la Concorde; the feet of the German army stamp over the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Hitler is observed, as Caesar and Napoleon before him, gazing out across the Channel to the white cliffs of Dover. Goering appears and places a fat and confident finger upon a map. The three great stages of the Battle of Britain are planned and prepared; the Home Guard is hurriedly improvised; Mr. Churchill, in a quite convincing impersonation, is heard telling us to fight upon the beaches; and the neat bowls of the detectors begin to search and pry against a lowering sunset. The bombs and the dog-fights then begin. St. Paul's stands serene against the flames; huge hoses gush water and then trickle dry; women and children crowd quietly into shelters; and slowly, gradually, sadly, the Battle of Britain fades out into its unrealised victory. It is all quite true: it is all most courageous and effective; but I was left wondering whether in fact it had all been quite like that.

*October 8, 1943.

When I got back I took down my diary for the year 1940 and read again my own daily account of this prolonged and anxious battle. The essential difference between the film version and the real version was that, whereas the film producers knew exactly how the whole affair had ended, our major preoccupation at the time was that we had no conception whatsoever of the ultimate result. The emotions of pity and terror aroused by the actual events, the anxiety created nightly when the sirens screamed, were as nothing to the underlying apprehension that these attacks were but the prelude to some horrible invasion. To those of us who knew the existing proportions of power, who were aware of the actual state of our defences and equipment, it was almost intolerable to watch the drawn pale faces of our fellow citizens and to feel that they might be forced before long to endure even greater agonies and privations. Only those of us who knew the grim realities of our danger can properly appreciate the desperate courage which during those dark weeks inspired our leaders and ourselves. Only those who knew the hard and horrid facts can remember rightly the inspiration, the tremendous example, given us by Churchill's unflinching defiance. 'If necessary for years,' he said to us, 'if necessary alone': it seemed at the time an almost despairing battle-cry; but it was a battle-cry which made even the weakest among us feel heroic. We think of Churchill today as the architect of victory; we admire his foresight and intelligence; but for those who watched him during the dark months of 1940 our deepest gratitude is towards the man who, by strength and faith, proved the bulwark against disaster. The O.W.I. film gives an exact picture of the foreground of immediate fear and courage; it does not indicate the background of despair and faith.

When we look back upon those terrible days and nights they seem to blur in our memory into a composite picture of flame and smoke. We forget how constant and how reiterant was the fear to which we were exposed. Reading my diary I observe how night after night came the scream of bombs,

how every morning the pavements were littered with the dust of broken glass, how every day I had to note the destruction of some lovely building or familiar resort, how transport was disorganised and communications severed. From time to time I would escape from London and spend a Sunday in Kent. High above our heads the dog-fights continued, the zoom of wheeling fighters would throb among the yew hedges, the white streak of the exhausts would weave dissolving arabesques across the sky. A Spitfire crashed in flames upon my local station; the station-master was injured and the booking-clerk was killed; when I got there on Monday morning nothing remained of the station except a twisted bicycle and an automatic machine lying, with scorched sides, among the debris. Yet somehow the pulse of life beat steadily; I would gaze as the train took me to London on the familiar orchards, wondering whether I should ever see them again; and sometimes the train would hide for hours in a tunnel or one would be transported by bus from one station to another. All this, at the time, seemed curious and even exciting; it was the dark dread behind it all which sapped the nerves. We knew that the landing-barges and the transports were massing for invasion among the islands and creeks of Holland. And it was weeks, many weeks, after the danger had actually passed from us that we knew, with astonished relief, that the Battle of Britain had been won.

Turning the pages of my diary I came across the date of October 8th, 1940, three years ago exactly from the date of this article. On that night I dined with Professor Julian Huxley and his wife at the Zoological Gardens. We discussed how, if victory came to us, we could so organise the world as to prevent a third European war. We agreed that any scheme of federal union could be only an ultimate ideal and would not be practicable in the conditions of inflamed nationalism which would certainly become rampant when Europe was liberated and peace restored. I urged upon him the practicability of recreating the League of Nations while strengthening its judicial authority and providing it with unchallengeable

force to impose its decisions. He took the line that a more reasonable and effective method would be control of all raw materials by the United States and ourselves. In the midst of our argument the siren sounded and a few minutes later his little flat began to rock to the thunder of adjacent guns. The Professor became anxious about his animals. The carnivores, he assured me, were comparatively under control, although a zebra the other night had escaped from a bombed cage and had been recovered later wandering amicably in a side street in Marylebone. He felt that he must go down to the gardens and see that all was well. I went with him. It was a beautiful moonlit night and the searchlights swayed and swung against a soft mackerel sky. As we entered the gardens a flare released from some German bomber floated slowly down under its neat parachute; the bushes turned green under its alarming light and the shadow of railings was thrown upon the path. The shells from the anti-aircraft guns spluttered like lit matches in the sky. Bombs began to howl downwards and there was the sound of explosions in the streets of London. The battle died away slowly to the east. A fire flickered distantly under the moon. The Professor, still arguing, got out his car and drove me home.

How comforted would I have been that evening had I known that the Battle of Britain was drawing to its close, had I been able to see forward to October 8th, 1943, and to visualise the triumphs which were in the end to come. It may well be that London will again be exposed to similar ordeals. It may well be that once again, even if for a shorter time, we shall see the circle of flames dancing against the sky. But never again shall we pass through so dark a valley of distress as we traversed in 1940. The foreground of our experience may be even more terrifying; but the great dread which haunted us will not come again; whatever happens (and terrible disappointments and disasters may come) we shall not again dread defeat.

50. SWEDEN IN WARTIME*

I WAS unable last week to contribute a Marginal Comment since I was stuck in Stockholm with no aeroplane to bring me back. I am glad of this,† since on re-reading the article which I had prepared but failed to send to London, it seems to me that I was too bemused and dazzled by the lights and friendships of Sweden to convey my impressions either in their right proportions or their correct order. After four years of total darkness, it is confusing to find a city draped with necklaces of arc-lights, to watch a million windows blazing uncurtained in the night, or to be able from across the street to see into the bright recesses of some art-dealer's shop, and to recognise a Boudin hanging on the wall, and a statue of Mirabeau against a piece of tapestry. Neutrality in such circumstances does not suggest a legal status; it represents a continuance of those amenities and delights which ended for us September, 1939, and which we supposed, in ignorance, had passed for ever from Europe. I can understand that Sweden's neighbours—the Danes, the Finns and the Norwegians, having suffered terribly from the war, should regard with envious anger the comforts which neutrality conveys. The spiritual arrogance engendered by the endurance of great tribulation is apt to render one contemptuous of those who have escaped. The Swedes are not regarded by all their neighbours with that warmth of gratitude which they expect; and even we in England, who have in comparison with occupied Europe experienced but slight vexations, are apt to misjudge Sweden, to think of her only in terms of iron ore and German troop trains, and to forget the skill, the humanity and the essential dignity that she has displayed.

The Swedes are a proud people: *immense orgueil justifié*. They did not strike me as being conceited. They are proud of their dramatic past; they are proud of their present social

*November 12, 1943.

†Other emotions prevailed elsewhere.—ED., *The Spectator*.

system; they look forward with pride to an orderly and prosperous future. They can claim with justice that in this difficult modern world they have managed to combine all that was most venerable in their ancient institutions with all that is most progressive in the realm of social advancement. They can claim that in their country there are no extremes of wealth or poverty, and that the poisons of class jealousy do not clog their veins. They are proud of the physical beauty of their men and women; of the roundest reddest babies that any country can boast; proud of their wonderful education and their interesting architecture; proud of their schools and hospitals, of their palaces and villas, of their music and gymnastics. And they are proud—with a defiant and sometimes a slightly wounded pride—of the fact that in the Second German War they have been able, in spite of almost insuperable difficulties, to maintain their independence, their self-respect, and their high standard of living. Such pride is admirable, since it is based, not upon fiction, but upon facts. And behind it all there is a sense of responsibility; a sense of opportunity; a sense that their sanity, their decent dealing, is proving, and will prove increasingly, of great value to a stricken world. The ideal of gentlemanly conduct is very operative in Sweden today. They ask for recognition and gratitude from nobody; they feel responsible only to their own conscience; and that conscience is vivid, realistic and humane.

I was fortunate in the fact that my arrival in Sweden coincided with the exchange of British and German prisoners in the harbour of Gothenburg. Here was an overt demonstration of Swedish efficiency, here was an open and proclaimed act of helpfulness, which compensated for the fact that so many of their previous acts of humanity had been either unnoticed or unavowed. The Swedes are naturally disappointed that their fine contribution to the relief of starving women and children in Greece has attracted but slight attention either in Great Britain or in the United States. They are hurt that the Norwegians should not be more grateful for the un-

stinted assistance which Sweden has given to the men, women and children who have escaped across the border. They are aware that they will obtain but little credit from the fact that within the last few weeks they have been able to receive more than eight thousand refugees from Denmark. In a country of only six millions such an invasion of refugees constitutes no easy social problem; yet how different, both in spirit and in practice, has the attitude of the Swedish Government been in such matters from the glum selfishness of our own Home Office. This absence of gratitude, or even of ordinary human recognition, has thrown the Swedes back upon themselves. 'We do not,' they say, 'even care for recognition from an insane world. We are responsible to nothing except to our own ideals and traditions. We shall continue, within the limits of our strength, to remain neutral and to act impartially, with wisdom, generosity and intelligence, to all belligerents alike. It may be that when the war is over Europe will recognise the part which we have played. Sweden meanwhile is responsible to herself alone.'

I do not wish to suggest that this mood of slightly injured pride precludes the Swedish people from feeling ardent sympathies for those fellow Europeans who have suffered in the war. They are acutely sensitive to the fact that, compared with the sufferings of their immediate neighbours, their own ordeals have been slight indeed. They look for an early peace with a longing no less than ours, and with an optimism which fills the English visitor with astonishment. To us it seems that many weary months must pass, many new and hidden anxieties must be surmounted, before we can organise the overwhelming strength which alone can give us total victory. The Swedes do not share this gloomy anticipation. Many of them seem to have derived from their visits to Germany the impression that the German people have lost faith in their leaders. It is said, moreover, that whereas the old civil servants in Germany retain their reputation for high integrity, the corruption among the Nazi officials and the S.S. is such as to discredit the whole Hitlerite régime. And if one questions

their optimism they smile with inner assurance. 'You do not know,' they say, 'the condition of Germany today. We do.' And in truth the stories that one hears are strange indeed.

The town of Helsingborg looks out across the sound to where the towers of Elsinore glisten in the autumn sun. Four ancient Junkers patrol the channel slowly, passing up and down in search of refugees and automatic mines. In the cemetery above the town are the graves of seven British airmen, their names and the words 'Died for his country' painted upon neat white crosses. And a mile or so beyond lies the sanatorium of Ramlösa, which was being used as a clearing-station for Danish refugees. In the gallery which ran along the main building several Jewish families were waiting to have their names and occupations entered upon the card-index. As we entered the gallery the policemen sprang to attention, and a spasm flashed into the faces of the refugees. I raised my voice and said something aloud in English. The refugees relaxed immediately and grinned slyly at each other, knowing that each for a horrible second had supposed that the Gestapo had come. Never until that moment had I realised the confidence, the relief, which a few words of the English language can inspire. And when, one by one the refugees had registered their names, they passed out with their pathetic bundles into the little park in which the other buildings were situated. Upon their faces was an expression of numbed bewilderment; they smiled very vaguely at the brisk Swedish nurses who took them gaily in charge. Over there, across the water, glimmered the shores of Denmark, the most recent outpost of the New Order. I watched the refugees being distributed among the little houses in which they would be washed and clothed and fed. I felt glad that we were fighting this war. I felt glad that Sweden wasn't.

51. THE LEBANON CRISIS*

THE ACTIONS and pronouncements of the French National Committee offer reasonable hope that the Lebanese crisis is on the way to being solved. Much credit is due to General Catroux, to Mr. Casey, to Mr. Harold Macmillan and to the National Committee for the spirit of co-operation and the speed with which they have coped with a situation of the greatest complexity and danger. It is to be hoped that the Lebanese nationalists, whether Druse or Maronite, will show equal realism and good sense. It is to be hoped also that this sudden thunder-storm which crashed into the sultry atmosphere of local Anglo-French relations will have done something to ease strained nerves and to cool angered suspicions. The French are somewhat bewildered by the storm of indignation which the action of Monsieur Helleu has aroused. It may well be that Riad es-Solh and his companions sought to confront M. Helleu with an accomplished fact upon his return from Algiers; it may well be that they hoped to exert unjustified pressure upon the French authorities by profiting from the presence of British forces in their midst; yet for M. Helleu to arrest the President and the Ministers without consultation, either with his superiors or with the representatives of his Allies, was an act of grave intemperance. There can be little to add to the admirable summary of the situation contained in the leading article in last week's *Spectator*. Yet I should wish, now that the storm has somewhat subsided, to add two things. The first is that it is now apparent that M. Helleu acted on his own initiative and in disregard of the instructions which he had received both from the National Committee and from General de Gaulle himself. And the second is that British public opinion might seem in this matter to have been ignorant of, or indifferent to, the opinions and the feelings of France. It would be a grave error to concentrate our attention solely upon Algiers, or to imagine that

*November 26, 1943.

such a thing as French opinion does not exist. On the contrary, the people of occupied France are vividly aware of everything that happens in the liberated territories of Africa, and follow with tense anxiety the attitude adopted by Russia, the United States or ourselves in all questions affecting French prestige or French sovereignty.

We should remember, for instance, that the Syrian area has always proved a focus of infection, even of poison, in Anglo-French relations. The misunderstandings which arose after the last war owing to the MacMahon letters, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the activities of Colonel Lawrence, and the deposition of the Emir Feisal did as much as anything else to shatter Anglo-French co-operation during the vital years which followed the Treaty of Versailles. The French are by nature a sceptical and even suspicious race, and have always been apt to attribute to British statesmen motives and purposes which our rulers are in fact too vague to possess. Most Frenchmen are convinced that Lawrence's dream of a vast Arab Federation under British influence is a dream which successive British Governments have adopted as a secret policy. '*Chaque Anglais*,' say the French of Syria, '*se croit un petit Lawrence*.' And they point to our oil interests, our Palestinian problems, our invasion of Syria and our insistence on Lebanese independence as proof positive of what they feel. The unanimous outcry which arose on the occasion of the Beirut episodes will have confirmed their suspicions. They do not know, they cannot believe, that our policy is as empirical as it is.

It might have been more tactful also had we all remembered that the last time the French people, through their Parliament, had occasion to pronounce on this problem they voted against Lebanese independence. The Statute of Liberation drafted by Monsieur Viénot (at that time Under Secretary in the Léon Blum Cabinet) was not ratified by the French Chamber. It is possible, it is even probable, that were the French people to be consulted on the matter today they would endorse Monsieur Viénot's original proposals. But

their acceptance of such a liberal solution will not be rendered easier by the fact that its critics will now argue that it was imposed in circumstances damaging to French prestige. The French, moreover, are a logical race and may point out that it is inconsistent of us to contend, at one moment, that the National Committee cannot be regarded as possessing sovereign powers and at the next moment to expect them to commit so extreme an act of sovereignty as the abandonment, on behalf of the French Republic, of a mandate entrusted to it by the League of Nations.

It may be argued that these legalistic points, these points of prestige, have no validity in the midst of a war of liberation. Yet in dealing with a legalistic nation, and one that has suffered agonising blows to its prestige, such points should at least be borne in mind. More important than such disregard, however, is the fact that we in this country appear to have forgotten the immense and ancient ties of sentiment which attach the French to Syria and the Lebanon. Some of our newspapers have written as if the French were causing trouble about a mere slice of mandated territory acquired as part of the spoils of the First German War. Yet, in fact, France's connexions with, and feelings for, the Lebanon are infinitely more ancient, far more sentimental, than any bonds which may bind, or have bound, us, let us say, to Tanganyika Territory or to Iraq. It was Charlemagne himself who laid the foundations of the Frankish Protectorate and who received from Harun-el-Rashid the keys of the Holy Places. The leaders of the First Crusade were not Germans or English, but Godefroy de Bouillon, Robert de Normandie and Raymond de Toulouse; the history of their crusade was written under the proud title of *Gesta Francorum*. The city of Beirut was included in the Frankish Kingdom of Jerusalem and the first Christian families to settle in the Lebanon bore the French names of Puy-Laurent and de Larminat. The Crusader castles which give such point to that lovely scenery are rightly regarded as masterpieces of French mediaeval architecture—'*Ces revenants*;' Tharaud calls them, '*ces grands*

fantômes de notre féodalité.' It was St. Louis himself who, on May 21st, 1250, addressed to the Emir of the Maronites a proclamation assuring him that his people would be regarded 'as part of the French nation' and would forever be protected by the might of France. These assurances were repeated by Francis I, by Louis XIV in 1649, by Louis XV, by the Republic, and by Napoleon. And when in 1860 Napoleon III renewed the tradition by sending General Beaufort and an army to Beirut to protect the Maronites against the Druses, the whole of France burst into the song of '*Partant pour la Syrie.*' It is not, therefore, merely some mandate of the League of Nations which the National Committee are surrendering; they are abandoning one of the most ancient, one of the most sentimental, of all French traditions. It would be fitting were we to remember that the sacrifice which they are making is both difficult and deep.

The tradition of a long and loving connexion between France and the Lebanon lasted well into the present century. Even in my own memory, French diplomatists and consuls who visited the Lebanon would on their arrival (and much to their embarrassment) be met by Maronite bishops and sprinkled with holy water and drenched in incense. These memories, these old affections, persist. Nor is it only of Charlemagne, of St. Louis, of Francis I that the French think when they think of Lebanon; they also think of Lamartine and Renan and Gérard de Nerval. For them the Lebanon will always recall the legend of the troubadour Joffroy Rudel, Prince de Blaye, who fell in love with Melissande, *la princesse lointaine*, and journeyed as a pilgrim to Tripoli only to die in her arms, '*Jamais,*' wrote the troubadour, '*d'amour je ne jouirai, si je ne jouis de cet amour lointain.*' Much of this old Lebanese legend lingers in the mind of the French. It would be a mistake to interpret their attitude as based solely on prestige or power politics. We should tread lightly, since we are treading on their dreams.

52. OXFORD AND THE YOUNGER GENERATION*

IT IS sad and strange that Oxford, whose very motto is one of illumination, should be the darkest city in all the land today. In other towns some glow-worm lamp does at least reflect a pin-point on the pavement, indicating where the way to Grimsby cuts the Great North Road. But, when sunset passes, the black-out gathers Oxford firmly in its arms, muffling every eye and orifice, shrouding the spires in impenetrable dark. The visitor on arriving at the station finds the platform a medley of struggling forms composed almost entirely of bicycles and the Army. A distant light, with brown paper tied around it, indicates the wicket at which the collector receives the little squares of cardboard which we thrust into her hand. And beyond that dim portal is darkness impenetrable pierced by the shouts of forlorn men calling cabs. Grasping my suit-case I tottered out into the night. I suppose that in the world there are other towns as dark and damp as Oxford in war-time. Zhitomir, for instance, can scarcely be garish at this time of year; and I assume that even the oil lamp outside its bath-house has for security purposes been dimmed. It may be also that the Pripet marshes, on a November evening in the rain, can emulate and perhaps even surpass the damp of Oxford. Yet as I walked along the road which leads from the station—bumping into Americans, bumping into Canadians, bumping into other human beings of whose nationality I was unaware—I reflected that in no other area of the earth's surface could it rain in just the same way as it rains at Oxford. For when the waters of the upper air mingle with the waters of the Isis and the Cherwell a general liquification results; the rain ceases to fall downwards but creeps sideways and upwards from the streets. And all this wetting process happens silently, without a single sound. Not a splash is heard in the surrounding darkness;

*December 3, 1943.

one is aware only that one's very thigh-bones are being slowly soaked.

Groping cautiously along I observed how *déceptive* are the effects of total darkness, in that the front of Worcester College looked like an enormous oak and the great trees in the garden quadrangle at Balliol looked like the front of Worcester College. Sadly I murmured the lines in which Tennyson celebrated his return to Trinity:

‘I past beside the reverend walls
In which of old I wore the gown;
I roved at random through the town,
And saw the tumult of the halls;’

But there was no tumult in the halls. A few medical students in mackintoshes sloped up the wet steps with a dim torch to guide them; and in the hall itself a lonely little group of Dominion officers were consuming spam and water. I found the ‘guest-room’ which had been allotted to me. It was on the ground floor and adjoined the room from which sixty-five years ago George Nathaniel Curzon had impressed his personality upoh his Balliol contemporaries. I considered how stimulating (in principle) was the high Spartan discipline which Balliol imposes upon her alumni. How different was this noble simplicity from the chintz and steam-heating of Yale or Harvard, of Princeton or even Amherst. A naked bulb glared down upon the jug and basin of cold water, upon the hard cold celibate bed. I took the towel and wiped the mist that had gathered on the looking-glass. With blue and shaking fingers I put the studs into my shirt. I took my torch and passed out again into the darkness; the tune of *In Memoriam* was still humming in my head:

‘And looking back to whence I came
Or on to where the pathway leads;
And crying “How changed from where it ran
Thro’ lands where not a leaf was dumb”;
But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan.’

I attended that evening the annual dinner of the Chatham Club. Suddenly I found again the Oxford which I have always known. Here was light and laughter and mulled claret in a loving cup, upon the silver of which were engraved the names of those who had been killed in the First German War. The undergraduates present appeared to be the same as those whom I had known, through generation after generation, all these years. We toasted 'Church and King' and we toasted the memory of the immortal Pitt. Many of those present had, it is true, been discharged from the Services, for wounds or illness in the war—a circumstance which gave to their young lips a firm and settled look. Yet there was no trace in them either of self-pity or of undue self-esteem. They were preparing themselves soberly and earnestly for a life which they knew would be difficult, but which they did not think would deny them opportunity. My thoughts went out to all those other men in the Forces who are being denied their education and their pleasures, and who, from time to time, write me letters which disturb me. Are they, indeed, as they suppose, the 'lost' or 'forsaken' generation, the men who have fallen between two worlds, 'one dead, the other powerless to be born'? They have been denied learning, and they have been given far too much experience. Life has snatched from them the youth which they were given to enjoy, and their April and their May are spent not among the blossom and the primroses, but in mud and blood. They dread lest when they return (if they return) they will find a world in which their advantages are disadvantageous, and their assets liabilities.

I have sought in all sympathy to understand the sorrow of the young intellectual who has been caught, and displaced, by the war. It is no doubt a tragic and bewildering experience to discover that the *élite* into which one was born, and to which one was educated in boyhood, would seem during one's own absence upon a most unprofitable adventure, to be losing its authority. Scholarship, intelligence, even experience, appear to have become less important; and the old tests and standards of eminence seem to be threatened by the

rise of an internal and external proletariat. I fully recognise that the men and women who in 1939 reached the age of twenty are in an indefinite position. The men of my father's generation believed quite simply that creation was moving towards an event which was not only Divine, but also far-off; their actions and ambitions were guided and controlled by the belief that Providence had decreed that a certain class of Englishman should rule a quarter of the globe and furnish an excellent example to all other men. In my own generation we were content to expose the moral fallacies of our elders and to put in their place a belief in intellectual integrity. After the last war the young men who returned to the Universities sought to recompense themselves by all forms of self-indulgence for the hardships and dangers to which they had been exposed. They were followed by a generation of austere men and women who believed quite sincerely in the existence of the economic man and who derived much spiritual and intellectual solace from the perfected logic of the Marxist theory. But the young people of today neither believe nor disbelieve in any theory; they have come to learn that the world is a highly intricate organism, and that most of what has been said about it is either partially or totally untrue. And since they dismiss the wisdom of the ancients as being fallacious and the advice of their immediate elders as savouring of 'propaganda,' they are left naked with their own horrible but slight experience and a deep consciousness of the enormous intricacies of life.

With the tiny torches of their own knowledge they grope amid the majestic ruins of the past. I am not surprised that they should feel 'forsaken.' Yet if they can believe in no absolute theories, they can at least know that courage, truthfulness, energy, scholarship and kindness are virtues and that their opposites are vices. With their little torches they can see and illumine these great absolutes. Guided by such stable landmarks, they can find their way through the dark, wet fog which surrounds them. And in the end, I suppose, they will find warmth again, and laughter and light.

53. EDWIN LUTYENS*

MUCH HAS been written this week upon the themes of Lutyens the great architect and Lutyens the entrancing companion. By the public he will be remembered as the designer of the Cenotaph, and indeed the speed with which he improvised that simple but intricate memorial seemed to those who watched him working to be borne upon the wings of genius. The lay-out of New Delhi, which might have provided the finest processional way in all the world, was marred by departmental economies; but we may be sure that the Viceroy's House at least will remain as one of the most notable examples of English applied architecture. It will be years before we can tell whether the Catholic Cathedral at Liverpool will justify the high promise of its model and designs. In any case, Lutyens is certain to rank with Norman Shaw and Philip Webb as among the greatest British architects of the last hundred years. It was only late in his life that he acquired the scope, the ardour and the ambition of an architect on the grand scale, and even then his fulfilment was hampered by two great wars and the penury and delays which they produced. The larger proportion of his life (the full force certainly of his adult invention) was devoted to domestic architecture and to the designing of small and perishable things. Yet it is interesting to observe how between 1888 and 1913 he developed from the picturesque, through the traditional, towards the classic. And one is surprised to discover that throughout these marked variations of intention and method there ran a curiously distinctive strain; an emphasis, a sense of proportions and an ingenuity which were wholly personal.

His picturesque, or Surrey, period showed a rapid development. Crooksbury, which he built in 1891, is certainly an unsuccessful house; but even here the steps which lead to the porch are drawn with something of the Lutyens swing and

*January 7, 1944.

swagger. Munsted Corner, which followed in half-timber and tile-hanging, seems to have led him to repudiate for ever such facile and unauthentic materials. In the design of the cloister at Orchards he showed how even in 1899 he could develop a conventional theme with lavish originality. And in Grey Walls and Little Thakeham (1902) he was able to crown his picturesque period by two buildings which combined extreme ingenuity with simplicity and strength. It was not long, however, before he tired of the gables and mullions of the Tudor tradition, and began to work in hipped roofs and sliding sashes. The little house at Monkton, with its wonderful view and curious design, enabled him to exploit that gift of gaiety which, in more solemn associations, was often developed into a fault. The Salutation, Sandwich, was more successful in that it achieved happiness while avoiding whimsicality; and the steps which lead down from its garden front are the true forebears of the vast propylaea which adorn the façade at Delhi. In 1906 Lutyens made his first major experiment in the Palladian manner. He was given a free hand to construct, upon an impossible site, a mansion of his own design. Heathcote at Ilkley was an ambitious enterprise, from the construction of which Lutyens learnt many lessons and acquired a few tricks. The result is honourable rather than triumphant, and the garden front is marred by one of Lutyens's strange quirks of flippancy in the shape of a foolish window where a pediment should have been. None the less, Heathcote marks his development from a designer of charming houses to an architect on the grand scale.

The genius of Lutyens was always being impeded by his cleverness. He was an admirable restorer, and his work at Lindisfarne or Great Dixter is fine indeed. Under the influence of Miss Jekyll he brought his architecture tumbling into the garden, and we find the unfortunate masonry of Hestercombe or the intricate heaviness of the sunk garden at Marshcourt. From Philip Webb he had derived a deep respect for natural materials, and with his accustomed ingenuity he studied their application, sometimes unfortunately and

sometimes with success. Original as was his combination of chalk and brick and flint at Marshcourt, the resultant effect was brilliant rather than satisfactory; only at Daneshill did his experiments with small bricks prove, during his middle period, a complete success. There were times when his gift for using material in unexpected ways produced results which were not justified by the expense; he had a most extravagant habit of constructing garden paths from slates arranged like a pack of cards upon their sides. His architectural humour (as at Nashdom) was not always frivolous; his inventiveness (as at Papillon Hall) was something more than whimsical; he could construct secondary buildings (such as the Dormy House at Walton Heath or the memorial lodges at Leicester) which had all the charm of small things and all the dignity of great. He was apt, it was said, to think more of his elevations than of his plans and to cause thereby great inconvenience to his clients. Even the Palace at Delhi, superb though it is, was designed with slight consideration for the needs of Vicereines; and the Embassy at Washington, which has both grandeur and charm, is not adapted either to the domestic or to the official life of an Ambassador. Lutyens, who was himself indifferent to comfort, seldom seemed to realise that great works of architecture were sometimes places in which men and women and servants were expected to live.

It seemed strange to his clients that somebody so gentle should be so obstinate; that a man so considerate in the small affairs of life should be so relentless when it came to stones or staircases; that a man who regarded his own genius with such simple delight, and who viewed the solemnity of architecture with such awestruck veneration, should so frequently introduce into his buildings the jokes that he made in conversation. Never, however, since the days of Sheridan or Goldsmith has a man of genius been so widely beloved. Even the most sedate company, even the most imposing personages, would relax at the sight of that round figure, those round spectacles, that round and beaming face. He would intrude upon Kings or Cabinets with that bland certainty of proving

delightful which one finds in a gay child. His pockets would be stuffed with little pipes, with little pencils, with pruning knives to sharpen them, with scribbling blocks on which to illustrate his witticisms or ideas. His puns crackled around one like the fire-crackers of Guy Fawkes' night. 'Have I shown you this?' he would ask—and out of his pocket would come the scribbling block, and then a pipe, and then two boxes of matches, and then a broken pencil, and then the pruning knife. Puffing slightly from the exertion of getting these many possessions into their correct order, already beginning to giggle at the joke he was about to illustrate, he would at last get pencil to paper, and in a few rapid strokes would sketch, either a proposed mausoleum for some unpopular statesman, or else a schoolboy drawing joke, or else, quite suddenly, an idea which had occurred to him in the taxi for the readjustment of Trafalgar Square. With eyes of unbelievable innocence he would gaze up above his spectacles to see whether he was being a success. He could be pleased so easily; sometimes, quite unexpectedly, he could be easily hurt.

Lutyens possessed the faculty of making everybody feel much younger. He adopted an identical attitude of bubbling friendliness whether he was talking to a Queen Dowager or a cigarette girl, a Cardinal or a schoolboy. He would on occasions disconcert the elderly by intruding with outrageous flippancy upon conversations which were intended to be sedate. When reproved for those excursions he would show the most disarming contrition and begin all over again. His puns were unending; his gaiety irrepressible; his affections universal. He was a most lovable man. It is not surprising that the country should mourn the loss of so great an architect, and in the ears of those who knew him will echo always Tennyson's superb lament:

'The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with human eyes.'

54. HERR VON RIBBENTROP*

THE AIR MINISTRY on Tuesday published its estimate of the effect upon Berlin of the six great raids up to December 17th. It is clear that the whole administrative centre of Berlin, from the Friedrichstrasse to the Savigny Platz, is now in ruins. Architecturally, this is no great disaster. Nobody need regret the disappearance of the Mauerstrasse, Berlin's grim Wall Street, dominated by the powerful and ugly building of the Deutsche Bank. Nobody need regret the destruction of the Ministry of Education or of the drab tenement which housed the Prussian Home Office. Nobody need regret the elimination from the Tiergartenstrasse of those Victorian residences which defaced an agreeable site. Nobody need regret the collapse of the British Embassy which, behind a frontage of some style, concealed some of the ungainliest rooms in Europe. Nobody would feel regret if Hitler's palace, or Goering's Ministry, were laid low. But it is sad that the old Foreign Office, which consisted of three houses facing on the Wilhelmstrasse, may also have been destroyed. The *Auswärtiges Amt* did, in fact, stand for something different from the Berlin of William II and the Berlin of Hitler. It was small; it was quiet; it was unpretentious. It was almost the only building in Berlin which could boast of any ancestry. It had been built in the days of Frederick William I, and Frederick the Great when a boy must often have passed its windows, riding unhappily in the company of Lieutenant Katte and Lieutenant Keith. It had been remodelled in the days of Königin Luise, and its old fashioned windows may well have rattled as Napoleon's travelling carriage shook the cobbles outside. No. 76, the third of the three houses, had been the home, not only of the dancer Barberina, but also of Bismarck himself. Inside were grey marble corridors with a few white statues, a few portraits of Prussian Kings, a few sofas of white wood and scarlet plush. The rooms of the Foreign Secretary and of the

*January 14, 1944.

Secretary of State looked out upon the garden, which ran down to what was once the Budapester Strasse, and then the Gustav Stresemann Strasse, and is now the Hermann Goering Strasse. And in this garden was the official residence of the Foreign Secretary, a jolly little house, as it might be in St. John's Wood, known as 'The Villa.'

It was in The Villa that Stresemann would entertain his guests. His wife and sons would be present, and the devotion which they all felt for each other gave to their parties a domestic feeling. Stresemann, being a great, though dying, man, would on such occasions defy his doctor's orders. There would be Mosel wine and much food and many thick cigars. Stresemann would preside over these functions with the geniality of a man whose father had been a publican and who had started life as the Manager of the Saxon Union of Chocolate Manufacturers,—surely the most *gemütlich* function that could be conceived. He would be boisterous and indiscreet, shy and arrogant, gay and gloomy. His wife would watch him with delight and anxiety in her eyes. He would speak of art, about which he knew little; of music, about which he knew much; and about politics, which he approached with subtle rage. His physical appearance was disconcerting. He had a thick neck, a small bullet head, and eyelids which were fringed with pink. His frame was massive, his shoulders powerful, his whole architecture of the heavy type. Yet he walked delicately; his hands were the hands of a woman; his lips sensitive and extremely mobile. One would sit there, wondering what epithet could apply to the impression of sinuosity which he produced. 'Feline?'—no, he was too jovial to be feline; 'reptilian?'—no, he was far too fine for that; the impression rather was that of a bull-terrier which suddenly adopts the stalking position and becomes lithe and tense.

It is not the buildings only of the German Foreign Office which have been devastated. The tradition which hung about those walls was not in any sense the Hitler, or even the Bismarck, or even the Bülow, tradition. It was certainly not

the Holstein tradition, since that paranoiac had left behind him memories of distaste and shame. With the permanent officials of the old *Auswärtiges Amt*,—with men like Schubert, or Ow-Wachendorf or Richtoven—one could deal reasonably and honourably as with civilised beings. Even after the advent of Hitler, Baron von Neurath sought hard to protect that tradition from the histrionics of the Nazi system. Over the way was established a horrible caricature of the *Auswärtiges Amt* in the shape of the Bureau of Herr von Ribbentrop. And one night Neurath was dismissed and Ribbentrop transferred himself and his belongings to No. 76 across the road. He did not occupy The Villa itself, although he took from it the plate, the glass, the linen and the staff which had known the Stresemann times. The Villa was too unpretentious, too redolent of wiser days, to suit the drama of the Nazi adventure. And the old officials of the Foreign Office were drilled into giving the Hitler salute and were thrown most miserably into uniforms designed by Ribbentrop himself.

I have been reading this week a study of this horrible man written by Dr. Paul Schwarz and published by Julian Messner, Inc. of New York. The large, the gay, the joyous Dr. Schwarz did not in the very least care for Herr von Ribbentrop or his ways. When summoned to return to Berlin he decided that it would be far wiser to become an American citizen. Rejoicing in this decision he has amused himself by writing against Ribbentrop one of the wittiest and most damning indictments that could be composed. Frau Henkell, whose daughter Ribbentrop married, once described her son-in-law as 'an extremely dangerous fool.' It is on the basis of this thesis that Dr. Schwarz had designed the biography of his former chief and friend. He represents him in the guise of a 'half-baked Cagliostro,' as 'an irresponsible and reckless nincompoop.' He describes his curious career in Canada; his astuteness as a wine-merchant; his subtle social ambitions which, according to Herr Schwarz, enabled him to mingle 'with the lower ranks of post-war café society.' He indicates how, by buying wine in the black market during

the post-war years, he was able to make the acquaintance, and acquire the support, of the industrialist Ottmar Strauss. This manoeuvre cost him six cases of Moët et Chandon Ponsardin 1911: but it brought him into contact with Adolf Hitler. Dr. Schwarz then traces with jovial malice the stages by which Ribbentrop was able to supplant Rosenberg as Hitler's chief adviser on foreign affairs; how he became the Führer's Ambassador at large: his Ambassador in London; his Foreign Secretary. The diplomatic triumphs which Ribbentrop appeared to achieve, and notably the Anglo-German Naval Treaty, did much to strengthen his influence. Until finally the whole machine, unguided and unrestrained, drove straight towards the abyss.

Dr. Schwarz's analysis of the purposes and methods of Nazi diplomacy is shrewd and well informed. He is enraged by its 'infantilism'; he deplores its constant self-dramatisation and the unwary exploitation of success: he is shocked by its cynicism, recklessness and stupidity. He is even more interesting when he exposes its basic unreality. To him Ribbentrop is the most dangerous, because the most plausible, architect of this tragic fantasy. 'Ribbentrop,' he remarks acutely, 'is the sort of German who has lost himself and is looking for a substitute.' To the 'dangerous vagaries of this disintegrated personality' he attributes many of the disasters which have fallen upon the world. He has no illusions at all regarding the success of Ribbentrop's mission to London, which seemed at the time so dazzling to all German, and to some British, eyes. He analyses the failure of that mission with considerable insight. To his mind Ribbentrop when in London was acting, not as the representative of a healthy Power, but as 'the living bad conscience of a conspiracy.' But above all he cannot forgive Ribbentrop's moral destruction of the *Auswärtiges Amt*:—'the rape of a once decent institution.' Dr. Schwarz may derive some slight sad comfort from the fact that the German Foreign Office may now have been physically as well as morally destroyed; and that Nos. 74, 75 and 76 Wilhelmstrasse can be defiled no more.

55. HORACE AND THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN*

IT IS old-fashionable, I know, to indulge in classical allusions; and among those who follow the advance of the armies in Italy there are few perhaps who recall another journey which took place along that road one thousand nine hundred and eighty-two years ago. It was at Sinuessa, near Mondragone, —only a few kilometres behind the front line of the Fifth Army—that upon an autumn morning in B.C. 38 Horace and Virgil met. Virgil was thirty-two years old at the time and Horace twenty-seven or twenty-eight; neither of them had any conception of the immense fame which would be theirs. Virgil had already written the *Eclogues*, but they were only published in the following year; and Horace had only just started to apply his pupil pen to the writing of satires. For them the poetical phoenix of the century was Varius; and as they travelled on together through Capua and Benevento to Bari it can never have occurred to them that they were anything more than humble adjuncts to the diplomatic baggage of the magnificent Maecenas. Up and up they went through mountains which now gaze on carnage, sleeping in villas and in tiny inns, and then down upon the plain of Bari and on to Brindisi. Horace during that arduous but exciting fortnight kept some sort of diary: on returning to Rome he worked up his material into a Satire in the manner of Lucilius: and when today we read again the *Journey to Brundisium* we are half fascinated by the information that he gives us and half enraged that it should be so meagre and so vague.

It is not clear even what were the purposes or the date of this embassy. We know only that it must belong to that uncertain period between Philippi and Actium when Octavian and Antony were seeking to divide between them the empire of the world. The Conference can scarcely have been that of B.C. 40, since we know that Horace was only introduced to

*January 21, 1944.

Maecenas two years later. It can scarcely have been that of B.C. 37, since that meeting took place, not at Brindisi, but at Taranto. It is almost certain that the story concerns the negotiations between Maecenas and Antony which were held at Athens in the autumn of B.C. 38; and that Horace and his fellow-poets accompanied the Minister as far only as his port of embarkation. It is natural that Maecenas should have had with him as fellow-delegates M. Cocceius Nerva, who had been employed on previous negotiations, and L. Fonteius Capito, who was such a friend of Antony that he was later entrusted with the delicate task of accompanying Cleopatra to Syria. But why on earth were Varius, Plotius Tucca, Horace, Apollodorus and Virgil brought along? Mr. Eden does not drag all Bloomsbury with him when he flies to Moscow or Teheran.

It is possible, even upon a modern map, to follow Horace's slow progress from the capital to the Adriatic. Leaving Rome by what is now the Porta S. Sebastiano he would have followed the Appian Way, past the catacombs and the tomb of Caecilia Metella, past Castel Gondolfo and Albano, to the town of Ariccia, where he spent the first night. From there he went to the Three Taverns, or Forum Appii, the place to which the brethren came out to meet St. Paul. Feeling ill from the effects of the marsh water of Forum Appii, he embarked upon a barge on the canal which then drained the Pomptine marshes. He spent a miserable night. The boatmen shouted at each other; the frogs in the marshes croaked without ceasing; the mosquitos sang and stung. He was relieved at nine o'clock next morning to leave the barge and to wash his sore eyes in the fresh spring of Feronia. Then on to Terracina, Fondi, Formia and Sinuessa. It would have been between Formia and Sinuessa that he crossed the Liris or Garigliano River, where the front line now runs. And thus on to Capua, where the party rested for some hours while Maecenas went off to play tennis, and Virgil and Horace eased their limbs and aching eyes. Then the mule train was formed again, and up into the mountains wound the column,

past Benevento, Trevico, Canusi and the field of Cannae, and so down to Bari. And then, by careful stages, to Brindisi, where the great triremes waited to take Maecenas and his embassy across the sea to Antony. We are not told whether Horace and Virgil retraced their course alone. We know only that Horace (in spite of the fact that he felt most unwell) made a good impression during the journey to Brundisium; it was only a few months later that Maecenas presented him with the Sabine farm.

It is easy for those who have also ridden on mule back through mountainous country to imagine the details and the incidents of this Apennine journey. The slaves and the muleteers would have risen early and one would have woken to the sound of stirring around the camp. Horace and Virgil packed their own little bundles and waited rather shyly until the great men were ready for the road. And then they would start off in single file, the sun flashing on the armour of Maecenas' guard, the mules picking their way between rocks and arbutus bushes with obstinate delicacy, climbing high among the eagles and the peaks. A pause probably at mid-day, when the slaves would spread a carpet under the stunted trees and serve sausages and curdled milk. And then on again above the valleys until they reached the end of the day's marching and would be met by the slaves who had preceded them and prepared fires and bedding and warm water and rows of little thrushes upon spits.

It was then, we may suppose, that Maecenas, reclining upon cushions and dipping bread into mulled wine, would speak to the exhausted poets whom he had dragged with him from Rome. Virgil, Varius and Plotius were already on easy terms with the great Minister and would listen with trained respect to his suggestions as to the kind of poems which, now that a new order was established, they ought to write. But Horace, having only been introduced into that company but a few weeks before, must have been acutely shy. His weak eyes smarting from the smoke of the inn fire, he sought desperately to amuse Maecenas, to make a good impression

upon the man who could cause so vast a difference to his life. Gay and garrulous he must have been in those days, with a certain natural dignity and a fund of common sense of which Maecenas much approved. Such was the beginning of a famous friendship, such the first intimacies between the son of a freedman and the luxurious and effeminate aristocrat who boasted, perhaps too frequently, that he was descended from Etruscan kings. And behind it all, while the wood crackled on the hearth and the smoke hung heavily in the tavern room, would come the sound of frogs croaking in the valleys of the Liris, the Volturno or the Sangro. 'Remember Horatius Flaccus as you would remember me,' wrote Maecenas thirty years later in his final testament to the Emperor. Few literary friendships have been so decent or so deep.

It seems strange to me that men from Vézelay or Saskatoon, from Wilton or Wisconsin, should in some Apulian valley rest for a moment under rocks which once shaded the midday meal of Virgil and Horace. Have they caught some vision across all those years of a shy and virginal young man with a slight stammer and the glow of candour in his face? Of a plump little man beside him, rubbing black ointment gingerly upon his aching eyes? Can they see the wraith of the great Maecenas, epicene and shrewd, surrounded by his poets, his Greek secretaries, his Roman soldiers and his Illyrian slaves? And does some officer of General Juin's triumphant forces, looking down on the hard-won road from Venafro, wonder why the name of that battered hamlet should be so familiar, and murmur to himself the half-forgotten chords of lycée days:

*'Tendens Venafranos in agros
Aut Lacedaemonium Tarentum'?*

56. JEAN GIRAUDOUX*

I SELDOM listen to Radio Paris, since of all enemy transmissions it is the one which fills me with the deepest disgust. It is intolerable that the French language, which for two thousand years has been fashioned as the vehicle of reasonable truth, should be used by Laval as an exhaust-pipe for his noxious gases. The voices of the announcers, persuasive and modulated as are our own, use the language of Racine to utter mean reptilian thoughts and the language of Renan to tell lies. Yet at times I turn the thing on, curious to hear how they deal with the disasters which their friends are experiencing on the eastern front, curious to learn whether or no they will even mention the prowess of General Juin's forces in the area of Cassino. Always I turn the knob off again in sadness and anger. But the other night, waiting for some belated visitor, I again allowed Radio Paris to defile my room, and was at once arrested by a change of tone. They were talking quite seriously, quite sincerely, about someone who was dead. They were giving the obituary of Jean Giraudoux. The placid voice went on reciting the names of books which, in the days when Europe was still Europe, had given me such pleasure; recalling plays which, in the happy winter of 1938, had been produced at the Théâtre français. The French have always been adept at funeral orations, and this obituary of a good man and a gifted artist was sympathetic and well framed. But as I listened the speaker passed on to more recent years and spoke of Giraudoux's loyalty to the Marshal and to the Vichy system. How strange that such a thing should have happened to Jean Giraudoux! How strange that this sensitive and impassioned patriot should be proclaimed by Radio Paris as one of its staunchest friends!

Giraudoux was the type of man who is convinced that the desirable must be an illusion and that reality must always be disagreeable. He was a romantic pessimist, and would wake

*February 11, 1944.

from the most opalescent dreams—and 'opalescent' was in fact one of his favourite words—to find that a piece of coal had fallen from the fire and burnt an ugly hole upon the Aubusson. He would describe the most generous emotions and the loveliest vegetation, but in the end his heroines would slip the diamonds back into their reticules, and his orchids, when examined, would disclose a viscous fluid stinking with putrefaction. The most characteristic of his many books is perhaps *Suzanne et le Pacifique*. A French schoolgirl wins a competition set by an Australian newspaper. Her reward is a first-class ticket to the Antipodes. The ship strikes a coral reef, and Suzanne upon her little raft is cast up upon a desert island, where she remains three years. She becomes one with Nature; the parrots perch upon her shoulders and a penguin trots beside her as she walks naked along the beach. She is not conscious of any need for human companionship, she is conscious only of some deep desire which gnaws like hunger at her heart. Then suddenly one night there is a terrific cannonade, and the parrots of her island wake from their sleep and circle screaming among the stars. Next morning the dead body of a sailor is washed up upon the beach; Suzanne tends him lovingly, covering his huge frame with parrot feathers and red flowers. More bodies are washed up, English and German; in the pocket of one sailor is a newspaper, and she reads names which are unfamiliar to her—the Marne, Joffre, French, Foch. She realises that Europe is at war. Finally, she is rescued by an English yacht; she faints with enthusiasm as their hands touch her; she opens her eyes. 'Please lend me a handkerchief' are the first words she utters, after a silence of three years.

Giraudoux was typically French in that his intelligence was always at war with his imagination. He would curb his own sentimentality, either by laughing at it or else by describing it in the crudest terms. His passion for the incongruous was sur-realistic. A boy in Paris falls in love with a girl; he starts to follow her about; she is delighted by this episode and describes it with relish. 'Every morning he would wait for

me outside my hotel. He would take his stand outside a shop in the window of which anatomical models were displayed. There were varnished models of lungs, wax models of livers, heads cut in half which smelt of fresh bread, since there was a baker's oven in the basement. If one looked down through the skeletons one could see the baker below, white and well-nourished, a plump phantom. Once I had passed the shop the young man would follow me at a distance, no longer interested in the human frame, in eyeballs, or knee-caps, but stroking cats as he went along, stroking dogs, and invariably at the door of one café a huge Newfoundland, who was so affectionate that he would collapse sideways on to the hand which patted him.' It is in such fantastic terms that Giraudoux always tends to describe things which affect his sentimentality: Paris, the memories of his own childhood, a spring morning and young people who are falling in love. When dealing with the intrigues and legends of the gods and goddesses, as in *Amphitryon* 38, this method is highly entertaining; but in giving a mythological twist to contemporary events, Giraudoux obscured, more than he illumined, reality.

He came from the Limousin, and would always claim that this area of France gives to its children a special gift of perspicacity. He would assert that those born in the Limousin were from their childhood able, not only to see things, but to see through them. This habit of intellectual penetration was not diminished by the Ecole Normale, which teaches its pupils that nothing can be valid unless verified by the stark processes of reason. He studied German carefully and remained all his life, as he confesses in *Siegfried et le Limousin*, at once horrified and fascinated by the violent neurosis of the German mind. He entered the French diplomatic service and after some years in Scandinavian Legations became director of the department at the Quai d'Orsay which deals with the 'service des oeuvres à l'étranger,' corresponding more or less to our own British Council. The French Foreign Office welcomes and retains those of its members who acquire a literary reputation. As an official and as a writer Giraudoux was

doubly esteemed. And then an unfortunate thing happened. With the outbreak of war he was appointed a director of the French M. of I. It had not at that date been discovered that men of literary temperament are wholly unsuited for such a position, and within a few weeks the unfortunate Jean Giraudoux found himself the centre of a typhoon of vituperation. Within a few months he was replaced by a man better acquainted with the needs and sensibilities of the Press. And then came the break-through of Sedan and the capitulation of Bordeaux. Giraudoux decided to remain in France and to support the Marshal.

His pessimism, at the crucial moment, got the better of his romanticism; his perspicacity conquered his illusions; his reason triumphed over his hopes. Giraudoux was never able to believe the things which his heart ached to believe; even when talking to him one would observe at the back of his eye a little spark kindled by the Ecole Normale which was a spark of doubt. No man has ever loved France so passionately or so delicately as Giraudoux loved her; no man can have desired more deeply than he desired to believe that the fact of German victory was a nightmare and the dream of British victory something more than an illusion. But he had trained his mind to act logically and to curb the fantasies of his imagination. Even when his son, Jean Pierre Giraudoux, joined the Fighting French the father remained behind suffering excruciating doubts. Had he been a little less sensitive he would have been less of a martyr; had he been a little less intelligent he might have proved more of a hero. He reminds us that not all who served Vichy were treacherous, unpatriotic, or self-seeking men. His books survive him; lovely petals from a tree that was sterile of all lasting fruit.

57. THE BOMBING OF WORKS OF ART*

DURING THE past few weeks there has been much discussion, in the Press and elsewhere, of the problem whether military necessity can justify the destruction of buildings of religious, historical or artistic importance. Those who regard the mortal as more important than the immortal fail to separate eternal values from momentary hopes and affections: whereas those who consider art to be more important than individual lives are unable to distinguish between what is desirable and what is practical. I am not among those who feel that religious sites are, as such, of more importance than human lives, since religion is not concerned with material or temporal things; nor should I hesitate, were I a military commander, to reduce some purely historical building to rubble if I felt that by so doing I could gain a tactical advantage or diminish the danger to which my men were exposed. Works of major or artistic value fall, however, into a completely different category. It is to my mind absolutely desirable that such works should be preserved from destruction, even if their preservation entails the sacrifice of human lives. I should assuredly be prepared to be shot against a wall if I were certain that by such a sacrifice I could preserve the Giotto frescoes; nor should I hesitate for an instant (were such a decision ever open to me) to save St. Mark's even if I were aware that by so doing I should bring death to my sons. I should know that in a hundred years from now it would matter not at all if I or my children had survived; whereas it would matter seriously and permanently if the Piazza at Venice had been reduced to dust and ashes either by the Americans or ourselves. My attitude would be governed by a principle which is surely incontrovertible. The irreplaceable is more important than the replaceable, and the loss of even the most valued human life is ultimately less disastrous than

*February 25, 1944.

the loss of something which in no circumstances can ever be created again.

I consider the above to be a logical statement of a desirable aim. I am aware, however, that my logic is not unassailable and that the desirable must always be governed and controlled by the practicable. Were I pressed, for instance, to define what I meant by 'a work of major artistic value' I might discover that what I really meant were those objects and buildings which I happened to like myself. Is the Torre Mangia at Siena, for instance, more important (when it comes to paying for it in human lives) than the Oratory of San Bernadino at Perugia? It would be very easy for a trained logician to shake my premises under this heading. What again do I mean by 'human lives'? Do I mean ten men, or thirty men, or thirty thousand, or three million? Do I mean the abstention from some purely local engagement or the prolongation of the whole war? Here again I should find myself in difficulties. If I were willing to give my life for the Giotto frescoes would I also give my life for those of Sodoma? Certainly not. But if not, then my logic is reduced to a mere statement of personal predilection. And let the barrage thunder therefore, undeterred by highbrow whimpers, from Assisi to Perugia.

I know, moreover, that those of us who feel deeply and desperately about such matters constitute but an infinitesimal minority of the British, American and Russian peoples. Nor is it any use blaming the proletariates. It would be unreasonable to suppose that a Russian who has watched the church of Novgorod flaming round its golden domes, who has picked his way across the charred parquets of Peterhof, should have any feeling at all for the Palazzo del Te at Mantua. It is not sensible to reprove a doughboy from Iowa for caring nothing about Or San Michele. Nor should I hope to convince the mothers of Kettering or Luton that their sons should be exposed to a higher percentage of danger in order to preserve for posterity the balustrades and fountains of the Villa d'Este. We must face the fact that the British public are

not merely unaware of aesthetic values, but are actually prejudiced against them. To the ordinary British citizen the artistic treasures of Italy represent, either nothing at all, or else the curious pleasures of the idle rich. It is impossible to persuade such people that Vicenza or Venice are a part of their own cultural heritage. The smoke-cloud of class rancour drifts across their eyes and they would dismiss as reactionary, even as ultramontane, those who urged our commanders to spare Bernini's colonnade. Thus an aim which to a minority appears obviously, absolutely and eternally desirable, appears to the majority as some pampered pose. And since it is to the majority that our rulers must lend an ear, we of the minority must recognize that the desirable in this matter is in practice unattainable.

Our anger would to some slight extent be mitigated did we feel convinced, first that the allied statesmen and commanders were conscious of the importance of the issues involved, and secondly that the Italian front was likely to prove decisive. We are not so convinced. The dusty answers returned from time to time by the Secretary of State for War are not encouraging. It is not sufficient comfort to us to know that an elderly archaeologist has gone out to Italy to 'do what he can.' Were I a Catholic and one who felt sensitive to the religious associations of St. Peter's it would be almost intolerable for me to reflect how different, how very different, would be the attitude of the Government were it not Rome, but Mecca, or even the shrine of the Imam Reza at Meshed that was involved. The India Office and the Foreign Office would combine in panic to prevent the outrage to Moslem opinion which would be caused by any violation of the Holy Places of Islam; but since only Christian sensibilities are wounded by the threat to St. Peter's our anxiety can be dismissed as sectarian. If Perugia's Collegio del Cambio were the London Stock Exchange, if San Domenico were Canterbury Cathedral, or San Lorenzo York Minster, the Government would be forced to show greater solicitude. But as it is, neither the people of this country nor their Government

pause for one moment to consider what the world will think of them a hundred years from now.

It would be some comfort to me also did I feel convinced that the prosecution of the Italian campaign to a ghastly conclusion would decisively shorten the war. I am strategically illiterate but even to my innocent mind it seems improbable that upon so narrow a peninsular front sufficient armies can be engaged on either side to force a conclusive military decision. I recognise the important advantages which we have gained by securing Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica as well as a wide base upon the Italian mainland. I recognize the serious strategic and political importance of Rome and the Campagna. But when I watch the sledgehammer methods of our armies in Italy, when I realize that within a few months this devastating bull-dozer may be crunching into Tuscany, my mind turns sick with apprehension. I think of Siena, Volterra, Rimini, Ravenna, Verona, Padua and Venice. I think of the small towns, the farms and convents of Tuscany and Etruria. And I am sickened by the thought that two thousand years of artistic genius may be sacrificed to a side-show.

It is indeed a catastrophe that the most destructive war that Europe has ever witnessed should have descended upon the loveliest things that Europe ever made. It is a reproach to democratic education that the peoples of Britain and America should be either indifferent, or actually hostile, to these supreme expressions of human intelligence. It is a reflection upon our leaders that they have shown but a perfunctory awareness of their real responsibilities. And it will be a source of distress to our grandchildren that we, who might have stood firm as the trustees of Europe's heritage, should have turned our faces aside. To hope for a change of heart among the people or their rulers is, however, to hope for something which is quite impracticable: all we can do is to induce in them a slight, uneasy and recurrent sense of shame.

58. SIDNEY KEYES*

IT is sometimes said that this war, unlike the last, has produced no outstanding poet. I doubt whether this is a correct assertion. The poetry of Sidney Keyes, for instance, is certainly valuable poetry; once we have had time to assimilate it, we may pronounce its value to be great. There is little of it to judge by, and yet that little is complete in itself. We have the volume called *The Iron Laurel* which Routledge published in 1942. We have the collection of poems which the same publisher issued recently under the title *The Cruel Solstice*. There must exist in some form the morality play which Keyes wrote and produced at Oxford in 1941. There are memories and letters. It is possible, even from this scant material, to form some impression of the quality of his genius and to trace the development of his mind and taste. The first point about Sidney Keyes is his astounding precocity; he acquired the mastery of his inspiration and technique when scarcely more than a child. His poem, for instance, on *The Buzzard*, with its very intricate geometrical scheme, is handled with complete and muscular assurance. I have been told that he composed that poem, and very rapidly, when he was no more than a schoolboy of seventeen. It was written to fill a blank space in the school magazine; his tutor, to whom he showed it, saw at once that it was worthy of a more discriminating audience and advised him to send it to some London periodical. In his innocence and modesty Keyes sent the poem by the same post to three different editors; to his astonishment it was simultaneously accepted by all three; difficult explanations followed. The story is illustrative of boyish diffidence and underlying certitude of mind. For in truth his poetic gift was born fully armed: while still a stripling he strode in iron intellectual armour across the stones.

I never knew Sidney Keyes. It is possible that, lecturing one afternoon at Tonbridge School, I may have noted those

* March 24, 1944.

black eyes among the blur of faces below me and have observed his dark and shining hair tumbling over the pale forehead. If so, I have no recollection of the event. But since my first surprise at reading his poems I have been at pains to trace the threads of his short history. He was born at Dartford in Kent. His mother died at his birth, and for some years he lived with his grandfather, Mr. S. K. Keyes—a capable and tempestuous old man for whom he had a deep affection. His father married a second time and Sidney Keyes found in his stepmother almost all that he had lost when he was born. He was sent to Dartford Grammar School, a dark and frail and rather lonely little boy. His family at the time imagined that he would become a biologist, since he would spend hours in the shed beside the mill playing with his collection of reptilia, his lizards, tortoises and snakes. He moved to Tonbridge School, where he was placed in the lowest form. It was then, quite suddenly, that his genius blossomed. He was fortunate in attracting the attention of Mr. Tom Staveley, who became his tutor and his intimate friend. Almost at once he began to write poetry; Tonbridge is a civilised school, and although Keyes was never an athlete, although a contemporary describes him as ‘timorous-eyed,’ he gained the respect and even the admiration of his fellows. His sensitiveness, which was acute, was mitigated by robust self-certainty; he was quiet but secure. He went to Oxford with a scholarship at Queen’s and obtained an effortless first-class in history. His two years at the University were years of varied activity. He wrote and produced a morality play; he edited for Routledge a volume of Eight Oxford Poets; he indulged in under-graduate journalism; in loose untidy clothes he would roam for hours through the Oxfordshire countryside; and in the intervals of hard study he underwent his military training. The centre of his life was always poetry; his great adventures were the discovery of John Clare, of Yeats, of Rainer Maria Rilke, of the Provence of van Gogh. He was neither a natural nor an unhappy warrior; he found in military discipline the pleasure of orderly social co-operation. He joined the Royal West

Kent Regiment, was sent to Africa, and was killed, at the age of twenty, on Longstop Hill.

In some ways Sidney Keyes was typical of his generation. He was sensitive, of course, and most inquisitive; he mentions his 'hedgehog skin of nerves' even as he mentions his 'over-curious mind.' Although he had his moments when he admired those romantics who 'fly falcons at the angry sun,' yet his images are metallic rather than coloured. His pessimism was at moments that of a generation which believes itself to be lost between a dead and an unborn world:

'I see a black time coming, history
Tending in footnotes our forgotten land.
Hearing the once-virginal
But ageing choirs of intellect
Sing a psalm that would appall
Our certain fathers, I expect
No gentle decadence, no right effect
Of falling, but itself the barren fall:
And Yeats' gold songbird shouting over all.'

In his lovely lines to John Clare he seems to share the un-earned guilt of his generation, the 'responsibility for the world's disease.' But even in his forsakenness there is no note of self-pity, no surrender:

'Those flowering orchards, O to save those orchards
Of starred illusion from the climbing blight. . . .'

He knows that, in place of the chance of life, he has been given the certitude of death:

'If we could be alone for a moment only
While the spring grows, while blossoms fight
Within the bud . . .
If we had met before
And in another place, what wonders might we see
Sheltered by days and faces, under a flowering tree?

He shares with others of his age a dark resentment at the denial of opportunity; but with him resentment is no mere mood of irritation; it has about it a solemn tone of fate.

It is not, therefore, his amazing poetic skill only which differentiates Sidney Keyes from so many of his contemporaries, but above all his grave acceptance of the tragedy to which his youth was destined. It is not war only which appalls him:

‘The captive brain, the feet that walk to war
The ironbound brain, the hand unskilled in war
The shrinking brain, sick of an inner war.’

He has a firm sense of courage:

‘The fifes cry death and the sharp winds call.
Set your face to the rock; go on, go out
Into the bad lands of battle, into the cold-wall
Of the future, my friends, and leave your fear.’

But he is obsessed by the dread of pain, the certainty of death:

‘See
How I believed in pain, how near I got
To living pain, regaining my lost image
Of hard perfection, sexless and immortal.’

And a tragic import is given to his poetry by his deep premonition that he also must die in Africa: ‘and the tall miraculous city that I walked in will never house me’:

‘The bright waves scour the wound of Carthage.
The shadows of gulls run spiderlike through Carthage.
The cohorts of the sand are wearing Carthage
Hollow and desolate as a turning wave;
But the bronze eagle has flown east from Rome.
Rome remember, remember the seafowls sermon
That followed the beaked ships westward to their triumph,
O Rome, you city of soldiers, remember the singers
That cry with dead voices along the African shore.’

A man of his intellect, a man of his poetic certainty, might have pierced the cloud of uselessness which keeps the sunshine from our younger men. Sidney Keyes was killed before

he reached manhood; but he has left behind him something that is most powerful and lovely:

‘A boy’s voice flowering out of silence
Rising through choirs to the ear’s whorled shrine
And living there, a light.’



ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY



7145



**ALLAMA
IQBAL LIBRARY**

**UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR
HELP TO KEEP THIS BOOK
FRESH AND CLEAN**

THE JAMMU & KASHMIR UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY.

DATE LOAND

Class No. 824-9 Book No A548 F

Vol. _____ Copy _____

Accession No. 7145

--	--	--

